Kanya and the Yogi

KANWAR LAL

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Kavya and the Yogi

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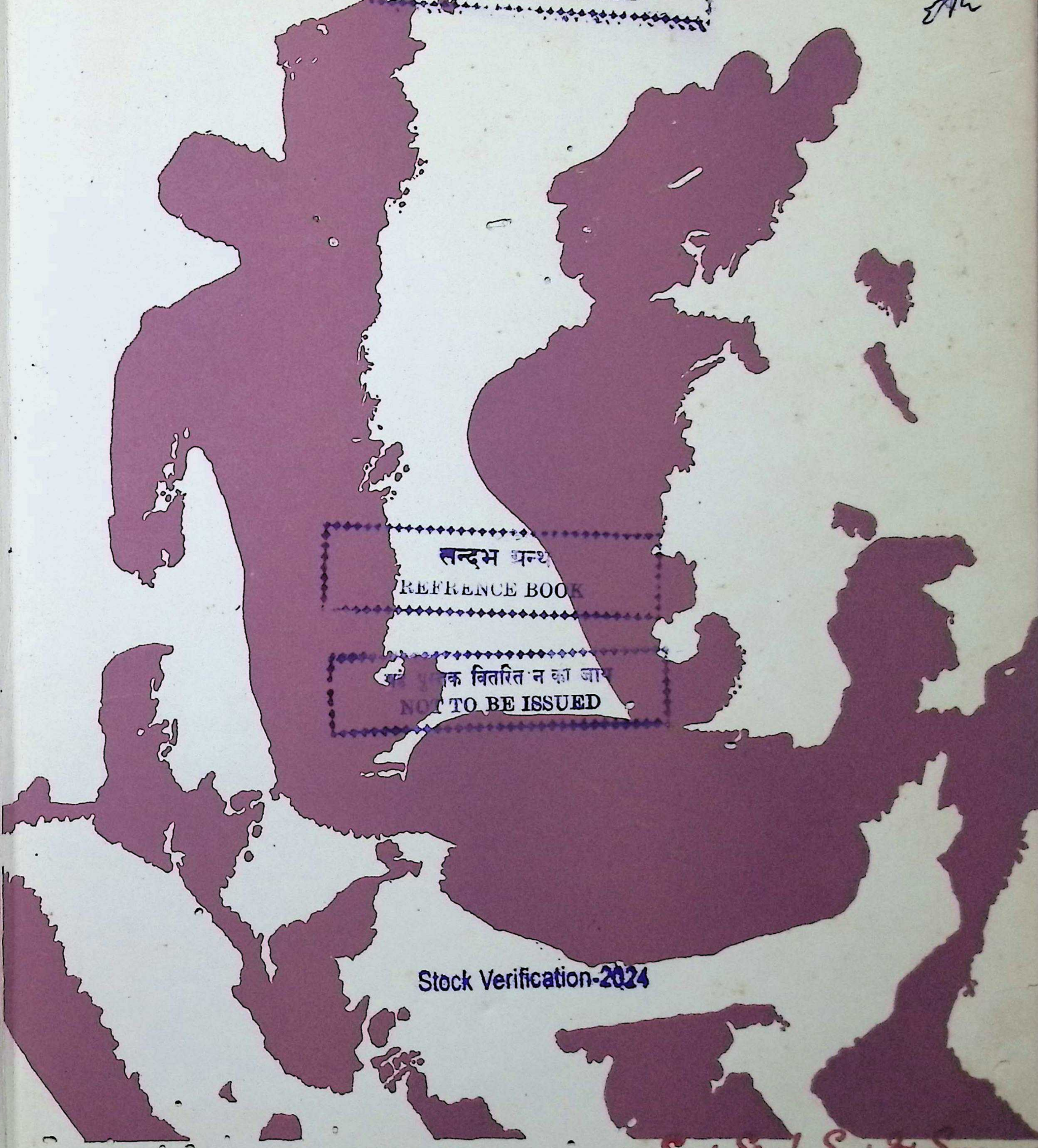

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PREFACE

Nothing could be more platitudinous than to observe that we all love life, cling to it even when it is full of pain and humiliation. Indeed, we wish to prolong it to the maximum, and would become immortal, if we could. Yet immortality by itself is meaningless. One does not want an endless life which is full of disease, debility and disgrace brought about by life's decline. Who can for ever bear the wrinkles and baldness, the sluggish blood and the second childhood, the dependence and the impotence, of Age ? Even now, we put up with such infirmity in the hope that some day there would be an end to it all. To face an eternity of such conditions would be wholly intolerable.

Obviously, something more is also needed. What could it be ? Thinking it out our sages found that eternal youth, a body beautiful and one which would never be a victim of disease and decay, was what we should possess. Any elixir for immortality must also confer the blessings of youth and all that is generally associated with it—the feel of power, the urge of vitality, the confidence that one can accept the challenges which Life throws, and which Desire throws.

Finally, the sages aimed at joy. Given life everlasting and youth and beauty that would never cease, there still remained the possibility of grief and sorrow. It would be terrible if the body stayed young and full of vigour and one lived on through eternity, but the mind was for ever sorrowful and the spirit for ever unhappy. Of course, this joy had to be not the kind which fools enjoy, not the bliss of ignorance. The children have that, but as they grow older they begin to know the difference between the joy that comes from wisdom and the mirth occasioned by the clouding of the intellect. It had to be joy of the wise.

Man had reached the final definition of God-head. It was now possible to sum Him up as *Sachchidanand*, having but three attributes, namely, *Sat*, *Chit*, *Anand* : He is, for ever ; He knows, has wisdom ; and He is full of bliss—is that refulgence, that happiness which is never dimmed, never shattered. Eager always to become God-like, Man, too, desired to be immortal, enlightened, and happy.

Of the many paths to this goal, the one that held sway for a long while, was that of the *yogi*. But that path emphasised renunciation—rejection of the world, rejection especially of woman. Woman, the beautiful young woman, in particular, was the *yogi's* arch enemy. He thought that she had but one aim—to allure and entice him. As if, man, generally, or even the *yogi*, did not need her ! Woman-born, man had dared to offer insult to the fount of life and the source of energy. She would have it back on him, and that she did with a vengeance.

It is a long story how this happened, but, in course of, time, an amazingly new turn was given to all thought on this subject. Woman became worship-worthy, especially as *kanya*, the virgin, so that the *yogi* now sought her out, and *desired* her. And all this without any risk of damnation, nay, with all the assurance that this path of *Bhog*, apparent enjoyment, will lead to the same goal as the way of *Yog* led to, namely, Salvation.

Earlier, the choice had been between romance and renunciation. This was both cruel on the human being as well as unnatural. What happened now was not exactly a return from renunciation to romance, from *mukti* to *bhukti*, from sex to soul, from *nirvan* to *sansar*, but a subtle combining of the two in which each was the other. The erotic, especially the Sexo-*Yogic*, postures that we see on the temples of the Hindus and which often mystify the viewer, symbolise this new philosophy. Verily, the quarrel of the *Kanya* and the *Yogi* ended, as all such quarrels ought to end, in a lovers' meeting.

Such is the theme of this study. It is a theme which has been partially examined in some of my earlier books. I have embarked upon this fuller examination, because of the common man's persistent tendency to regard Sex and *Yog* as aliens. Considering both the great interest which in recent years the world, particularly the Western world, has shown in the Hindu philosophy and praxis of *Yog*, and the present cataclysmic commotion in respect of sexual mores, it is necessary to put these things in perspective. After all, Mankind has problems enough to attend to, real problems, problems of food and shelter, and of War and Peace, which demand urgent solutions and pose a threat to the very life of the Species. Why should we fritter away our energy and torture ourselves over silly matters relating to the body's desires and mind's confusion regarding these? Let men and women of the modern age learn, from the ancient Hindu sages, the secret of this golden mean between flesh and spirit, learn this *Kam*-cum-*Yog* way to health and happiness. That will help put an end to the colossal misery and frustration caused by our *a priori* notion that *Kam* is our enemy, that Sex is a hindrance to our Salvation, and, may be, make for stronger bodies, saner minds, and serener human beings.

KANWAR LAL

Delhi,
30th March, 1970.

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हरिद्वार

1

The Goal and The Paths

> *Yam said : "The good is one thing, the pleasant another ; these two, having different objects, chain a man. It is well with him who clings to the good ; he who chooses the pleasant, misses his end."*
>
> *—Kath Upnishad*

WHAT IS the goal of human life ? What its worthy aim ? For that matter, why should there be a goal, we mean, a final goal, as distinct from a hundred other minor, or seemingly major, objectives which we keep on pursuing all the while ? Indeed, for a majority of mankind there is enough to keep one busy with the day-to-day problems of existence and it is rarely that a person steps aside from the movement of the concourse and starts reflecting over the why and wherefore of Life. What is more, seers of yore—some of them exceptionally gifted in respect of intellect and insight—found that, in all honesty, answers to these questionings of the human mind, to the problems of this world and hereafter, were quite often bewilderingly contradictory. Beginning with a bang, such searches and researches usually ended on a whimper. Sensibly enough, certain seekers either refused to bother about matters which they thought were beyond the ken of an average man, or, if they knew the answers, they preferred to keep silent. Most prominent among the wise of this kind was the Buddha who, when questioned on the nature of the Ultimate, refused to say anything.

The difficulty is inherent in the nature of the seeker, Man. The earth to which we belong is a very small portion of the Solar System, the system itself being no more than a speck in the myriad-starred galaxy of which our Sun is but one star. Our Galaxy is, again, just one in literally countless galaxies, scattered all over this ever-expanding universe. How can then the mind of man, cribbed, cabined and confined within its despicably poor limitations, reach out to a level where it can begin to comprehend Reality? *The Hymn of Creation* in the *Rigved* casts a doubt as to whether even God Himself knows everything. The very gods, says the Hymn, are later than Creation, so that for an explanation of things we cannot rely upon them. In fact, they themselves do not always know as to what they want, or ought to want.

The goals of life, and the purpose of creation, are, thus, not easy to discern. The mind cannot find them because of its own finite nature, and so we fall back upon faith! He, the Creator and the Originator of things, and He alone, knows, and knows what is best for us. Even as a child trusts his parents, so should we trust Him and do that which is our duty or which is obviously what we are expected to do. The lesson of the *Geeta*, the wisdom which Krishn was trying to inculcate in Arjun, amounts to no more than that.

Quite often, the approach is negative, wisely negative, as in the case of the Buddha; or cynically negative, as for the hedonist or for those who swear by the philosophy of 'Dust thou art, to dust returnest'. Nevertheless, there have been seers and sages who were granted a wisdom and a vision of a different order, and it is to them that we are indebted for such consistency as obtains in respect of any reasoned-out answer to this question of questions: From where and why and to what purpose?

Now, one dream-goal which we all seek instinctively is happiness. On this prime object of his life, man's heart was set long before the pursuit of happiness was defined as the right of every human being. Indeed—as Pascal put it—there is no man upon earth who does not seek happiness. It is a universal desire and whether we are on the right path or wrong, and whether we seek it the Hindu way or the Hippy way, it cannot be denied that the intention is to choose the path that will lead to this destination. Not without cause do we make *anand*—bliss—as the supreme attribute and characteristic of godhead. And that is a concept not merely of the Hindus but is met with in almost all religions, and quite understandably. Life flings man, poor creature, on a sea of anxiety and sorrow. Every new wave tosses him from one point to another and he thinks that he is being relieved of his suffiering—only to find that the place on which he lands is in no way different from that which he had left. His world is a many-horned animal and he is gored not on two horns of dilemma, but experiences a continuous series of shifts from horn to horn, and all of them are horns of pain, horns of sorrow. Most seers—and, among them, some who believed in God passionately, ardently, sincerly, fully—have characterised life as nothing but sorrow, all unhappiness. Though technically an unbeliever, the Buddha is supreme among such thinkers. In a line of his, Guru Nanak also sums up a similar view : *Nanak dukhiya sab sansar*—the whole world is unhappy. The crucifixion of Christ is, again, a clear symbol of our destiny's ruling characteristic. Life is a cross which each one of us has to bear, and which the faithful believer must learn to bear, patiently, cheerfully. And it is a cross on which we will be finally crucified ; and that, too, we must accept willingly. Men like Schopenhauer and some other philosophers of the modern world have also taken a rather gloomy view and formed a passimistic opinion of the Deity who, or Device which, has been responsible for creating this phenomenon—Life. Ghalib, India's great poet, thought that there was no question of man being freed of sorrow before his death, because life and sorrow were essentially the same :

Kaide-hayat-o-bande-gham, asl men dono ek hain
Maut se pahle admi gham se nijat pai kyon ?

And so, finding that—minor interludes apart which also were of an illusory nature—Life was, a continuous, uninterrupted stream of sorrow, man was naturally interested in seeking a way out of this, and into happiness.

Another goal, which men have sought instivctively was immortality, life eternal. Even the gods and the demons had aimed at the same and churned the Cosmic Ocean that it might yield the elixir of immortality. We learn from a myth of the Hindus how, since the prize aimed at was worthy of all this, the hosts of gods and demons, who were for ever at war with each other, had both suspended their conflict and called for a truce, so that they might jointly endeavour to obtain the drink that would confer immortality on them. For this they blended their strength to churn the Ocean and, as we know, they succeeded in their effort.

In Hindu mythology few stories are more significant than this one which concerns the obtaining of *Amrit*, the nectar of immortality. This precious liquid was kept in the Moon at the bottom of the Cosmic Ocean and getting at it was not easy. The only way was to churn the waters which, again, meant the employment of the combined strength of the forces of good and evil, represented by the gods and the demons respectively. As we said, these gods and demons had been at war ever since they were created but realizing the worth of the venture they agreed to be at peace and to cooperate in this mighty effort. The world mountain, *Mandar*, served them as the churning stick, and *Shesh*, the great snake on whom Lord Vishnu rests and which supports the Universe, as the rope for the churning stick. Folding the ends of *Shesh*, with the gods on one side, and the demons on the other, the strivers after immortality began the operation.

Whatever the outcome, the titanic try itself was significant. One of the goals of life—or should we call it a desire, a supreme desire, no more—had been defined. The fact that the gods as well as the demons were willing to work together for such a boon, indicates both the universality and the intenisty of the thirst for immortality. Here was something after which every one hankered and hankered desperately.

It took a thousand years to produce results. The effort bore fruit but, before the drink that could make one immortal rose to the surface, serveral other articles were retrieved from the Ocean. One of these assorted things which the churning yielded, was poison which Shiv—generous being—swallowed and might have died of, had not Parvati pressed his throat where it stuck for ever and still shows in the blueness of that part of Shiv's body. The other articles were of dubious value, though they seemed so attractive that each of them was avidly pounced upon for possession by whoever could acquire it, and each has been coveted as a prize in many a later myth and legend :

> "...And first
> Out of the waters rose the sacred Cow,
> God-worshipped Surabhi, eternal fountain
> Of milk and offerings of butter ; next,
> While holy Siddhas wondered at the sight,
> With eyes all rolling, Varuni uprose,
> Goddess of wine. Then from the whirlpool sprang
> Fair Parijata, tree of Paradise, delight

Of heavenly maidens, with its fragrant blossoms
Perfuming the whole world. Th' Apsarasas,
Troop of celestial nymphs, matchless in grace,
Perfect in loveliness, were next produced.
Then from the sea uprose the cool-rayed moon,
Which Maha-deva seized ; terrific poison
Next issued from the waters ; this the snake-gods
Claimed as their own. Then, seated on a lotus,
Beauty's bright goddess, peerless *Sri*, arose
Out of the waves;"

In a way they all posed the problem that every *yogi*, every striver, has to face, for one must not be deflected from one's course on account of these glittering by-products, these attractions which are but hindrances. One must persevere in one's search for *Amrit*, or whatever else, and whether a divine something or profane, which constitutes one's goal.

When the task was done, and Dhanwantri appeared with the bowl containing the elixir of immortality, Vishnu organized that celebrated ruse through which the demons were cheated of their share. He assumed the form of a most bewitching beauty, *Mohini*, the eternal enchantress, and stepped forth into the pandemonium that had been caused by every one rushing forward to take the sip that would confer immortality. This brought about instantaneously such order as only Beauty's presence can command. "Hush", said every body and thereafter stayed rooted to the ground. Relieving Dhanwantri of the container of nectar, this Loveliness incarnate smiled at them all and told them to sit down in two separate rows, one of the gods and the other of the demons, and take their turn for the drink from the bowl she now held and with which she would move from person to person. The fools ! the demons, of course, who trusted this illusion, for soon all the gods had been served with *Amrit*, with precious little left for their erstwhile allies. Sensing how they had all been taken in, Rahu sprang into action and snatching away the bowl held it to his lips. Equally quick in his response, Vishnu threw his quoit at him. However, the demon had already taken a sip which had gone down his throat so that, though Vishnu's weapon destroyed the rest of the demon's body, Rahu's head was already proof against destruction.

In the fight that ensued and in all fighting that would take place in the future, the gods had and would have the advantage of immortality. What is worse, this was not going to be the last occasion when the female would fool the demons. Though they were but pale reflections of the splendour of *Mohini*, those *apsaras* that had come out of the Cosmic Ocean would always be available for tripping any demon—or man—who sought, through spiritual realization, an immortality akin to that which the gods enjoyed.

Ever since then, men as well as the demons have been striving for the same, for immortality. They would undergo untold penance in order to obtain this boon. Yet even if one succeeded in attaining to a state of deathlessness, what would be its use if it meant an immortality of suffering, and an eternity of sorrow, a life everlasting but full of misery and despair and pain, and of longing unsatisfied and desire unfulfilled ? Obviously, if one were to aim at an everlasting life, make immortality a goal, it was also necessary to have happiness along with that. Surely God is eternal and *happy*, because to conceive of a God who is eternal but unhappy, would be a mockery of godhead and, in such a case, eternity would only be a terrible burden. Now, unhappy but mortal man can, at least, *hope* that life will have an end. In the verse of Swinburne :

"From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever ;
That dead men rise up never ;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
Nor any change of light :
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight :
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal ;
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night."

We may, if we would, look forward to an end of this miserable and joyless life to which we cling, God knows why, cling out of some strange sense of duty and obligation, which we call the dictates of *Conscience*—the same which, in Shakespeare's phrase, 'does make cowards of us all'—or because 'Hope springs eternal in the human breast,' and we are taken in by idle optimism, that one day the clouds will disappear and the sun will shine, for, in the words of Shelley, 'If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind ?' And so, we continue to suffer 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune'. All this is obvious. None the less, there is the welcome prospect of death and of an end, some day, to the bearing of this burden of sorrow, of this load of life, which lies so heavily, on our frail souls. Thank God that though He has given us life, He follows it up with Death, that if life is sorrow, there is also a termination thereof. True, we know not what lies beyond this so-called terminus, and 'there's the rub !' But that is another matter.

Such philosophy apart, some people had the courage to dream and dare ! They were really willing to suffer an eternity of unhappiness, but would go on seeking the clue to the riddle of life. Scientists have gone on endeavouring and their motto has been 'Excelsior' ! In their own way, they have tried to find what the Buddha was trying to find, namely, enlightenment, wisdom. They have dared to know and whether Adam and Eve erred or not in doing that, they have willingly eaten the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge—an act which has led to whatever man has achieved, through his own effort, on this long and arduous path, his career upon earth. Perhaps wisdom will never be his ; perhaps he will never know enough to sit back and say : I know truly. Perhaps he is condemned to go on and on for ever, and never reach the end of his search. Nevertheless, he is determined to continue the search, to keep up his endeavour to probe into the limitless reaches of the universe, and get, if he can, at the secret of it all, at the substance beneath the surface, at the reality behind the illusion.

Fate has ever led man to ask for more, even as a child will ask for the impossible from one's father. From his Father, his God, man has often dared to seek both immortality and joy. And these two have constituted the twin aims of existence after which the *Yogi* has yearned, nay, after which every common man has yearned. A little glimpse of what he chooses to seek, a bit of joy, of that in which he is interested, he has known; has known of it in many ways, but above all in the experience of the sexual embrace, in the ecstasy of the *mithun*. For once, may be for only a split second, he soars to a height and tastes of a bliss, which he would like to make eternal. We refer to this because to this experience, which yields such mystic wealth and emotional richness, most men and women have, and may have, access. The *Yogi* knows of ecstasy in his *sadhana* and the Poet or the Artist, too, knows of bliss. But as we said, for the common people, the most easily accessible experience of ecstasy of mystic bliss, is provided in love-making.

It is obvious that if it were not possible either to achieve this happiness at all, or to achieve it without eternity being added to it ; if it were, that is, short-lived so that one would have to suffer once again the same kind of miserable and unhappy existence, then man would not aim at godhead. Life eternal, without bliss as an absolutely essential component thereof, would not be welcome. We have also seen that happiness, if it is short-lived bliss, if it is temporary joy, which in any case men and women have known and experienced in some way or the other and for long periods or short—then, too, men would reject such a gift. Only if one can be godlike—eternally young, eternally happy, above all sense of sin and fault, and without those terrible enemies of the soul, fear and anger—will man be prepared to barter whatever he has in exchange for what he believes to be the nature of God.

Let us look at the matter from another angle. The Economist tells us that the one and only goal of man has been food and that civilization is merely what he has achieved, almost as a by-product, in his endless search for food. The Psychologist says that in addition to the search for food, there is another satisfaction which man is for ever seeking and that is the satisfaction of his sexual desire. Food and sex these, then, are the two main 'pursuits' of the human being. Indeed, in the opinion of many authorities, these are the only true pursuits of man, everything else being mere gloss, surface polish. All our activity is thus related to our two chief instincts, namely self-preservation and self-perpetuation. We search for food in order that we may prolong our individual life, and, through gratification of our sexual desire, we perpetuate the species. Finding that he could not live for ever, that he was mortal, and after making plenty of vain search for some elixir of immortality, some nectar akin to that which, in the myth of the churning of the Ocean, the gods and the demons had striven for, man found his solace and satisfaction in his progeny. Thus, men die but Man lives on ;

the individual perishes, but the species persists. There is, however, a third, even if controversial, point which is often made in respect of the goals and aims of life, the same which we have spoken of already as the search for happiness. What it is—this thing called happiness we know not, and different people have their own concepts. The cynic, for instance, defines it as a good meal and a bank balance, the sage as a clear conscience and inner freedom. But few will deny that we are for ever seeking it and tend to make it another of our consistent aims of life. Reduced to the minimum the philosophers defined the aims of life as (1) gaining immortality; and (2) finding happiness. The search for food or the satisfaction of our sexual desire, the two primary hungers of man, are, like all else, means to other ends; and of these ends the two mentioned above constitute the essence. Reducing it further, we come to the compression of both these in the phrase, an eternity of joy. Surely, in seeking immortality nobody was seeking an unending stretch of suffering or the opportunity to burn in the ever-lasting bon fire of hell. It stands to reason that the obvious idea was to gain perpetual happiness, to live for ever, but with wealth and happiness of body and mind. Logically proceeding along these lines, we can understand notions of heaven and paradise, and why, in almost all faiths, these places were included in their cosmos.

But myth and legend apart, in actual practice man found that he was condemned to be a mortal, was doomed and fated to die, and that the span of his life, which could be cut short without notice, was often not much longer than, according to the Hindu way of thinking, a hundred years. It was also clear that along with this curse of mortality, life had another drawback: there was little joy in human existence. Other thinkers now began to offer a slightly different approach to the problem of defining the aims of existence. In respect of happiness, it was found that what we considered to be a source of joy would, before long, soon cease to be of much interest, and was, quite often, and ironically enough, found to be a source of sorrow, so that it was literally true that we did not even know what was good for us. It was no more than illusion and, in fact, happiness always lay in the future, beyond the horizon, and that whatever man touched became, even though it had appeared from a distance to be gold, merely dust. It was found that, verily, it was better to travel than to arrive, that man had pursued only chimeras, had followed what was only a mirage. His folly and desire goad him on towards mountains, which appear to be blue because of the distance ; and when those mountains are reached they are no better than the brown, barren stuff one has already seen. Consumed with this endless desire—resulting in endless despair—Man began to think afresh. When the Buddha thought it through, he came to the conclusion that it was impossible to get aught of worth out of life, that life represented misery and nothing but misery, and that whatever little pleasure we thought we had got was only an illusion, was a coating of sugar for the pill of pain. Pain was the reality—this was the wisdom at which he arrived. Then he came out with his 'four noble truths' which have the same validity today as they had when he had first realized and proclaimed them. Life, he said, was sorrow from beginning to end, from birth through living to death, and this in birth after birth ; and Desire was at the root of this pain for it was Desire's impulses which made us live ; the only sensible approach was to get out of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth, and the way out lay in overcoming Desire through shattering its power completely.

In a way, the *rishis* had already anticipated this and ages before the Buddha was born they had adopted a similar approach. They taught that we should gain *mukti*, salvation. Our soul, they said, takes birth because of its past actions and is allowed the kind of life that it deserves through a strict evaluation of our *karm* in earlier birth or births, for it must work out the 'fruit' of its *karm*. However, it was possible, through following certain techniques or such means as had been explored and found useful for the purpose, to attain deliverance. As we shall see, the concept of salvation and deliverance, of *mukti* and *nirvan*, which the Hindu *rishis* had, was altogether different from the concept of *nirvan* or ceasing to be, which the Buddha and his first followers believed in. One was a positive philosophy of uplifting ourselves to god-head, of rising from humanity to divinity, and reaching out from this world of desire and frustration, of sorrow and confinement and limitations and all that the flesh is heir to, to the world of the immortals and to the opportunities of the region where the gods dwell ; nay, even higher, so that getting itself freed from its fleshly cage, the individual soul, which partakes of the same essence as the universal soul, will merge with the latter. The Buddhist, on the other hand, had a negative attitude in this matter. It was not a question of a life ever-lasting and joyful, at the end of it all, but of ceasing to be, of a progress towards Nothingness, towards Emptiness, *Shunyata*. In later times, there would be a head-long collision between these two attitudes, the net result of which would be that the negative approach would yield to the positive and the Buddhists would be obliged to modify their concepts and ideas and to conform to the positive approach. In this process of revision, Buddhism reached out to the other extreme, and the views and ideals of its founder were completely nullified. All this will come up again for a fuller discussion. Here we merely wish to record that yet another goal of life was the achievement of *nirvān*, whether positive or negative.

In the earlier stages of this whole development, there was no clash between these values. As we said, a positive and a very healthy philosophy of acceptance of life was in operation during that period. What the people were trying to get at was an eternal life like that which the gods were living after they had partaken of the drink of nectar and, additionally, to enjoy ever-lasting bliss like God who as *sat*, *chit* and *anand*, is the embodiment of bliss. In short, Man was striving to be God. Nor was there, for those men, such a rigid compartmentation between the human and the divine, between the earth and heaven, as came to obtain in later theology. It was accepted that these various categories of beings existed at different planes, but these planes were interchangeable so that many men had attained to god-head through their spiritual merit, through seeking and receiving the grace of God by means which we shall examine in due course. Likewise celestial beings could be condemned to life in human shape. There was, therefore, no rigid wall between the world of man and the world of gods, and it was merely a question of how one had lived, what one had done, and what good or evil one deserved because of one's past actions. It is true that the gods had, on account of their nectareous sip, received the gift of immortality but as myth after myth shows, they, too, were subject to anxiety and harassment and other ills of this kind.

The new development was along more realistic lines and men and women were rudely shaken up by this man of towering intellect, the Buddha, who would not deceive himself through pleasant philosophies. Even though his heart was full of compassion, there was no question of showing any softness in respect of the exact evaluation of human existence. Finding that, in fact, life was nothing but suffering he would not extend any concession on this score. He would not paint it in rosy colours. No, it was no longer possible to romanticise life. This greatest realist of all time, the Buddha, refused to beguile himself with fanciful pictures of paradise, or to offer any hope whatsoever for human beings to cling to. He was determined to shatter

Man's idea of a securer world, of a world of make-believe. And so, we gave up our endeavour to reach, out of humanity and its limits, unto divinity and its apparent blessings, and found ourselves grovelling, like worms, in dust.

In all earlier progress woman had played an important role even as she would in this new view of the world, and of the aim and goal of life. Earlier, she had been a hindrance and obstacle in the path to realisation, to higher evolution, in our progress towards the attainment of immortality or eternal joy or the status of a god. When Vishvamitra would become a god through his *tapasya* and possess the throne of *Indra*, *Indra* sent one of his beautiful females, an *apsara* from his court, to lure the ascetic and make him fall from the 'ideal' he had been maintaining. For countless millions, ordinary human beings, woman was the hindrance that obstructed the view even of our goal, and most of us were content to stay as and where we were, and be no better. It is true that often she played her part of being a hindrance through being an attraction, but that made little difference to the result. Now, with the Buddha exhorting us to get out of the cycle of birth, woman was condemned as an enemy. It is she who beguiles us into accepting life through sexual desire and through attachment and affection and all else that she stands for. The daughters of *Mar—Tanha*, *Rati* and *Rag*—personified the forces which keep us bound to the wheel of life. Like the carrot for a donkey, so does woman make man move on, carrying the burden of existence. In this miserable, unhappy, uniformly dreadful, hopeless affair called life, she works as an ally to the great enemy, *Mar*, the god who, in the Buddhist philosophy, personifies both desire and death, so that we choose to stay caught for ever in his dread noose. It is true that the Buddha withstood the charms of the daughters of *Mar* as he had withstood many other temptations offered, as well as attacks made, by the enemy. But for one Buddha who could do that, untold millions, nay, countless generations of millions of people, have found it difficult to vanquish this enemy, or his representative, woman. Whether we look at her from the earlier, Aryan, or from the later, Buddhist, point of view, or, again, from the still later, Hindu point of view which made woman both a help as well as a hindrance, she has been the ally of life, the ally of gods, and has kept us chained to this earth, to life, and stopped us from moving either towards divinity or towards non-being. Thus were the goals of immortality and joy reduced to a farce, because of her. All that we have been able to manage is perpetuation of the species, attaining 'immortality' in our children and our children's children. As for happiness, it remains a dream, no more.

This may be the situation today, or at least the cynic will put it that way. Yet for even these two thousands years and more after the Buddha, these goals have held valid and they still count. Men have pursued, and continue to pursue, these twin aims, immortality and happiness, and efforts have been made and are being made to seek means to achieve them.

In the great dialogue which Nachiketas had with Yam, the god of death, this point has been very well brought out :

" 'Choose now, O Nachiketas, thy third boon.'

Nachiketas said : 'There is that doubt, when a man is dead some saying, he is ; others, he is not. This I should like to know, taught by thee ; this is the third of my boons.'

Death said : 'On this point even the gods have doubted formerly ; it is not easy to understand. That subject is subtle. Choose another boon, O Nachiketas, do not press me, and let me off that boon.'

Nachiketas said : 'On this point even the gods have doubted indeed, and thou, Death, hast declared it to be not easy to understand, and another teacher like thee is not to be found—surely no other boon is like unto this.'

Death said : 'Choose sons and grandsons who shall live a hundred years, herds of cattle, elephants, gold, and horses. Choose the wide abode of the earth, and live thyself as many harvests as thou desirest.

'If you can think of any boon equal to that, choose wealth, and long life. Be (king), Nachiketas, on the wide earth. I make thee the enjoyer of all desires.

'Whatever desires are difficult to attain among mortals, ask for them according to thy wish ; these fair maidens with their chariots and musical instruments—such are indeed not to be obtained by men—be waited on by them whom I give to thee, but do not ask me about dying.'

Nachiketas said : 'These things last till to-morrow, O Death, for they wear out this vigour of all the senses. Even the whole of life is short. Keep thou thy horses, keep dance and song for thyself.

'No man can be made happy by wealth. Shall we possess wealth, when we see thee ? Shall we live, as long as thou rulest ? Only that boon (which I have chosen) is to be chosen by me.

'What mortal, slowly decaying there below, and knowing, after having approached them, the freedom from decay enjoyed by the immortals, would delight in a long life, after he has pondered on the pleasures which arise from beauty and love ?

'No, that on which there is this doubt, O Death, tell us what there is in that great hereafter. Nachiketas dose not choose another boon but that which enters into the hidden world.' "

In a way, every individual has been seeking and pointing out the path, so that it is true to say that there are as many paths to God—Eternal Wisdom, Eternal Bliss—as there are people upon earth. But extra-fine philosophy apart, there are four commonly accepted paths to the goal : through knowledge, through devotion, through works, and through the will. In the Hindu *Yog*-philosophy, they are known as *Gyan-Yog*, *Bhakti-Yog*, *Karm-Yog*, and *Raj-Yog*, respectively. Since all these seek the aid of the Will, it is the last, the *Raj-Yog*, the Royal Way, which is regarded as the classic means. To a study of this path of paths, let us now proceed.

It is necessary to clarify that the term *Yog* is used in two broad senses. One, as union and the other, as means to such union. In the latter sense, it is a *sadhana*—practice, a way—a way with many sub-ways, so to speak, many paths within the Path, with each of these paths-within-the Path having its own techniques and training. So far as our study is concerned, the term is used primarily in this second sense. It is a means to a goal, to any goal, but in the highest sense, to the goal of goals, merging of the self in the Self, seeking—and finding—the 'Man within man'. As we have seen, Life's aim has been variously fixed and defined. Some people seek happiness, others, immortality, and still others eternal youth, and many more, eternal love, or even love-making. Then there are those who aim at liberation, *nirvan*, or at-one-ment with the Self. In fact, the defining of these aims has been one of the major tasks of religion and philosophy and numerous theories have been evolved. Of these theories, the most meaningful as well as the most popular, is the one that has been built around the concept of our being, *essentially*, a part of the whole that is God, the Creator and Sustainer, the Beginning and the End of all that is and all that is not. Because the *essential* in us is kneaded for the living form we receive, with *Prakriti's*—Nature's—clay, our being has much impurity. This last acts as an impediment on the path of self-discernment, and keeps us from attuning ourselves to the Infinite. Put at its simplest, *Yog* is the means that helps us to detach our self from our illusory and transient form and to link it, for ever and a day, with the Self, which alone is Real and Everlasting.

2

The Royal Way

> "*Yog is restraining the mind-stuff* (*chitta*) *from taking various forms* (*vrittis*). *At that time* (*the time of concentration*) *the seer* (*purush*) *rests in his own* (*unmodified*) *state.*"
>
> —*Patanjali*

PATANJALI'S *Yog* school of philosophy may be regarded as *Sa Ishwar Sankh*—the *Sankh* school of philosophy with God. The *Yog Sutras* of Patanjali constitute the most authoritative compendium of the system and rank as one of the four great *Sutra* classics of Hinduism : *Dharm Sutras* of Jaimini, *Brahm Sutras* of Ved Vyas, *Bhakti Sutras* of Narad and the *Yog Sutras*. Together, these four cover man's four-fold development—moral, intellectual, emotional and psychic.

We said that Patanjali's metaphysics adds God to the Sankhyan school. If the earlier philosophy was concerned with those two concepts which have for ever constituted philosophy's main fare, namely Spirit and Matter, we have now a third principle introduced, that of *Ishwar*. For the layman, we could say that there is *Prakriti*—Nature or Matter, and there is *Purush*—Spirit, and there is Man who partakes of both. To put it in different terms, we may speak of *Parm-atma*, *Jeev-atma* and *Prakriti*. The aim and goal of *Yog* is to release the *atma* from its association with Matter so as to liberate it and to let it merge into the prime spirit, the soul of souls.

This involves, therefore, a two-fold task, detachment from *Prakriti* and absorption into *Purush*. As a means thereof, to the end of yoking and uniting, we have the system of *Yog*. Says Vivekanand :

"For thousands of years [such] phenomena have been studied, investigated, and generalised, the whole ground of the religious faculties of man has been analysed, and practical result is the science of Raja-Yoga... It declares that each man is only a conduit for the infinite ocean of knowledge and power that lies beyond mankind. It teaches that desires and wants are in man, that the power of supply is also in man ; and that wherever and whenever a desire, a want, a prayer has been fulfilled, it was out of this infinite magazine that the supply came and not from any supernatural being. The idea of supernatural beings may arouse to a certatin extent the power of action in man, but it also bring spiritual decay. It brings dependence; it brings fear, it brings supersitition. It degenerates into a horrible belief in the natural weakness of man. There is no supernatural, says the *Yogi*, but there are in nature gross manifestations and subtle manifestations. The subtle are the causes, the gross the effects. The gross can be easily perceived by the senses; not so the subtle. The practice of Raja-Yoga will lead to the acquisition of the more subtle perceptions."

Patanjali defines *Yog* simply as the restraint of mental modifications thus making it a means rather than end. He then moves on to defining the goal of *Yog* which is to make the seer become the Self. Achieving the goal, the seer abides in His Own Nature. *Yog* thus teaches us how to realise the pure nature of the *Purush*, of whom Vivekanand wrote as follows :

"We have first to understand what the Purusha, the Self, is, and what are the qualities. According to Yoga philosophy the whole of nature consists of three qualities or forces ; one is called Tamas, another Rajas and the third Sattva. These three qualities manifest themselves in the physical world as darkness or inactivity ; attraction or repulsion; and equilibrium of the two. Everything that is in nature, all manifestations, are combinations and recombinations of these three forces. Nature has been divided into various categories by the Sankhyas; the Self of man is beyond all these, beyond nature. It is effulgent, pure and perfect. Whatever of intelligence we see in nature is but the reflection of this Self upon nature."

The *Yog Sutras* are divided into four parts or chapters known as *Samadhipad*, *Sadhanapad*, *Vibhutipad* and *Kaivalyapad*. The first part defines the ground and, in a way, indicates the goal. We are told both about the

Nature of God and the various types of *Samadhi* and are given the exposition of different, but interconnected matters.

In the *Sadhanapad* we learn what practices to follow to attain the different kinds of *Samadhi*. It is not easily possible for everybody to plunge straight into the state of *Samadhi* and generally a step-by-step movement is needed. The *Sadhanapad* indicates these eight limbs : "*Yama*, (Vows or abstensions) ; *Asna*, (posture) ; *Pranayma*, (Breath-control) ; *Pratyahara*, (withdrawing of the organs) ; *Dharana* (concentration on one object); *Dhyana* (meditation); and *Samadhi* (super-consciousness)."

The *Sadhana* praxis consists of first a negative movement of changing the direction of thought from outward to inward and secondly, a positive inward movement to make the mind become fixed and concentrated at one place, on one object, one that which one is seeking. As Patanjali says : "By the practice of the different parts of Yog the impurities being destroyed, knowledge becomes effulgent up to discrimination."

Of the several steps that lead to the goal, five are connected with the 'extrovert' stages and three with the inward practice, or to put it differently, five are indirect aids and three are direct aids.

The first of these limbs is *Yam* (vows or abstensions) of which there are five : "non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-receiving. These, unbroken by time, place, purpose and caste-rules, are (universal) great vows."

The second indirect aid consist of five Observances, the *Niyams* :

"Internal and extrernal purification, contentment, mortification, study and worship of God, are the *Niyamas*.

To obstruct thoughts which are inimical to Yoga, contrary thoughts should be brought.

The obstructions to Yoga are killing, falsehood, etc., whether committed, caused, or approved; either through avarice, or anger or ignorance; whether slight, middling, or great; and result in infinite ignorance and misery. This is (the method of) thinking the contrary.

Non-killing being established, in his presence all enmities cease (in others).

By the establishment of truthfulness the Yogi gets the power of attaining for himself and others the fruits of work without the works.

By the establishment of non-stealing all wealth comes to the Yogi.

By the establishment of continence energy is gained.

When he is fixed in non-receiving he gets the memory of past life.

Internal and external cleanliness being established, arises, disgust for one's own body, and intercourse with others.

There also arises purification of the Sattva, cheerfulness of the mind concentration, conquest of the organs, and fitness for the realisation of the Self.

From contentment comes superlative happiness.

The result of mortification is bringing powers to the organs and the body, by destroying the impurity.

By repetition of the Mantra comes the realisation of the intended deity.

By sacrificing all to Iswara comes Samadhi."

The third limb consists of posture, *asans*. Contrary to the belief that *asans* have to be very intricate and difficult, Patanjali simply says: "Posture is that which is steady (*sthir*) and easy (*sukham*)", the idea being that by relaxation of efforts it should help in the contemplation of infinite and through right posture one is undisturbed by the pairs of opposite, of the outside world and the inner-world, for heat or cold, or pleasant or unpleasant and even effort and ease.

"By lessening the natural tendency (for restlessness) and meditating on the unlimited (Posture becomes firm and pleasant).

Seat being conquered, the dualities do not obstruct."

Next comes the fourth indirect aid, *Pranayam*, regulation of breath, stopping the movements both of inspiration and expiration : "Controlling the motion of the exhalation and the inhalation follows after this.

Its modifications are either external or internal, or motionless, regulated by place, time, and number, either long or short.

The fourth is restraining the *Prana* by reflecting on external or internal objects.

From that, the covering to the light of the *Chitta* is attenuated. The mind becomes fit for *Dharana*."

Once these four have been mastered, we now move to the fifth, indirect aid, namely *Pratyahar*. This enables us to reach a state when the senses cease to have contact with objects and follow, as if it were, the nature of the mind, This is the highest control of the senses :

"The drawing in of the organs is by their giving up their own objects and taking the form of the mind-stuff, as it were.

Thence arises supreme control of the organs."

Sadhanapad now leads to the *Vibhutipad*, which consists of the last three limbs of *Sadhana*, namely *Dharana*, *Dhyan* and *Samadhi*. These are introvert practices and interconnected as cause and effect. Technically, they are together named as *Samyam*. This part also describes the *vibhutis*, the powers and perfections that the *yogi* attains to.

The first of these direct aids is *Dharana*, concentrating, or fixing the mind in one place :

"*Dharana* is holding the mind on to some particular object." This leads on to *Dhyana* which is meditation, un-interrupted mental effort. The same, *Dhyana*, "when shining with the light of the object only, as if it were devoid of its form, is *Samadhi*. An unbroken flow of knowledge in that object is *Dhyana*. When that, giving up all forms, reflects only the meaning, it is *Samadhi*.

These three (when practised) in regard to one object is *Samyama*.

*By the conquest of that comes light of knowledge.
*That should be employed in stages.
*These three are more internal than those that precede.
*But even they are external to the seedless (Samadhi)."

Thus, we see that these, *Dharana*, *Dhyan* and *Samadhi*, form a continuous process, concentration leading to meditation which, intensified to the extent that there is only the light of the object—without the form of the object—illuminating one, is *Samadhi*, superconciousness.

This, *samadhi*, is for all practical purposes, the goal of the *sadhak*. A highly technical matter, it is difficult to comprehend it in all its subtlety and ramifications.

These three together constitute *Samyam*. By mastering *samyam*, one comes to the state of *Pragya*, wisdom.

Radhakirshnan defines it thus :

"Samadhi is the name of the condition to be passed through before reaching deliverance. Since the Yoga insists on attaining freedom through samadhi, it is defined as *Yogah samadhih*. It is the ecstatic condition in which the connection with the outer world is broken. It is the goal of the Yoga discipline, since it lifts the soul from its temporal, conditioned, changing existence into a simple, eternal and perfect life. The purusa regains through it the eternal status."

Its application is by stages and these three are more direct aids than the previous five aids and yet they are indirect aids in comparison with the *Nirbeej* state, the state in which no seed is left for a future birth.

The multi-staged path to this, to seedless *samadhi*, is neither easy, nor indicated. For in the praxis a point is reached where the answer to the question, "What next ?" is, in the words of Vyas, this : "*Yoga* is the teacher of *Yoga*; *Yoga* is to be known by *Yoga*; *Yoga* becomes manifest by *Yoga*."

Radhakrishnan throws some light on the nature of this state :

"A distinction is made between the state of samadhi possessing the seed of future life (sabijasamadhi) and that in which it is absent (nirbijasamadhi). Bija, or seed, according to Vacaspati, is 'the latent deposit (asaya) of karma which corresponds to the hindrances of birth, length of life and kinds of enjoyment.' That which has this basis is sabija, and that which is exempt from it is nirbija. Like all products of prakrti, citta has the three sides of sattva, rajas and tamas. According to Vyasa : 'its aspect of sattva, which is illumination, when comingled with rajas and tamas, loves power and objects of sense; the same, when dominated by tamas, tends towards vice, ignorance, absence of detachment and failure to realise its lordliness; the same, when the covering of error is removed, illumines all round, and since it is pervaded only slightly by rajas, tends towards merit, knowledge, detachment and lordliness. The same sattva, when the last vestige of rajas is removed, becomes grounded in itself (svarupapratistham), and being nothing but the discernment of the difference between the sattva and the self (sattvapurusanyatakhyatimatram), tends towards the contemplation of the cloud of virtue (dharmameghadhyanopagam bhavati). It is called dharmamegha, or the cloud of dharma, since it is full of dharma, or truth and rains blessings on the lower planes, while the man himself is basking in the light of the eternal sun of truth, raised above all afflictions and karmas. The contemplators (dhyayinah) call this the highest intellection (Prasamkhyanam).' "

However that be, this seedless (*nirbeej*) *samadhi* is total release from the cycle of re-birth, is the absorption in the Absolute. Even if glimpsed

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for a moment, or sustained for a time, it is not possible, obviously, to attain it while one is still alive. That would be like eating the cake and having it too. One would be *jeevan-mukta*, liberated in life. Such would be the Buddha ! and those who are incarnations.

A word about the *siddhis*, the powers of the *Yogi*. It is almost impossible to count out the powers and perfections which the *Yogi* can attain. Incidentally, *samadhi* is only one of the five 'ways' in which one may have these *siddhis*, According to a *sutra* of Patanjali, some of these—not necessarily, all—may be acquired through *yauni*, birth ; *aushadh*, herbs, *mantra*, incantation and *tap*, mortification also. The *sutras* say :

"By making *Samyama* :

On the three sorts of changes come the knowledge of past and future ;

On word, meaning, and knowledge, which are ordinarily confused, comes the knowledge of all animal sounds ;

On the impressions, (comes) the knowledge of past life ;

On the signs in another's body, knowledge of his mind comes ;

On the from of the body, the *Yogi's* body becomes unseen ;

By this the disappearance or concealment of words which are being spoken and such other things, are also explained.

On *Karma* of two kinds, soon to be fructified, and late to be fructified, the *Yogis* know the exact time of separation from their bodies ;

On friendship, mercy, etc., the *Yogi* excels in respective qualities ;

On the strength of the elepant, and others, their respective strength comes to the *Yogi* ;

On the effulgent light comes the knowledge of the fine, the obstructed and the remote ;

On the sun (comes) the knowledge of the world ;

On the moon, (comes) the knowledge of cluster of stars ;

On the pole-star, (comes) the knowledge of the motion of the stars ;

On the navel circle, (comes) the knowledge of the constitution of the body;

On the hollow of the throat, (comes) cessation of hunger ;

On the nerve called *Kurma* (comes) fixity of the body ;

On the light emanating from the top of the head, sight of the *Siddhas*.

Or by the power of *Pratibha* all knowledge ;

In the heart, knowledge of minds ;

Samyama on the self-centred one gives knowledge of the *Purusha*.

From that arises the knowledge belonging to *Pratibha* and (supernatural) hearing, touching, seeing, tasting, and smelling.

These are obstacles to *Samadhi* ; but they are powers in the wordly state.

SUPERNATURAL POWERS

When the cause of bondage of the *Chitta* has become loosened, the *Yogi*, by his knowledge of its channels of activity (the nerves), enters another's boby.

By conquering the current called *Udana* the Yogi does not sink in water, or in swamps, he can walk in thorns, etc., and can die at will.

By the conquest of the current *Samana* he is surrounded by a blaze of light.

"By making *Samyama* :

On the relation between the ear and the *Akasa* comes divine hearing;

On the relation between the *Akasa* and the body and becoming light as cotton wool, etc., through meditation on them, the *Yogi* goes through the skies.

On the "real modifications" of the mind, outside of the body, called great disembodiedness, comes disappearance of the covering to light;

On the gross and fine forms of the elements, their essential traits, the inherence of the *Gunas* in them and on their contributing to the experience of the soul, comes mastery of the elements;

From that comes minuteness, and the rest of the powers, 'glorification of the body,' and indestructibleness of the bodily qualities;

The 'glorification of the body' is beauty, complexion, strength, adamantine hardness.

By making *Samyama* on the objectivity and power of illumination of the organs, on egoism, the inherence of the *Gunas* in them and on their contributing to the experience of the soul, comes the conquest of the organs.

From that comes to the body the power of rapid movement like the mind, power of the organs independently of the body, and conquest of nature.

And finally, by making *Samyama* on the discrimination between *Sattva* and the *Purusha* come omnipotence and omniscience."

All this is not anything new because the Upanishads have already referred to this and more. In the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, for instance, we find that once the will is trained, it should be possible for one to get whatever one desires :

"And he who desires the world of perfumes and garlands (gandhamalya), by his mere will perfumes and garlands come to him, and having obtained the world of perfumes and garlands, he is happy.

And he who desires the world of food and drink, by his mere will food and drink come to him, and having obtained the world of food and drink, he is happy.

And he who desires the world of song and music, by his mere will song and music come to him, and having obtained the world of song and music, he is happy.

And he who desires the world of women, by his mere will women come to receive him, and having obtained the world of women, he is happy.

Whatever object he is attached to, whatever object he desires, by his mere will it comes to him, and having obtained it, he is happy."

And yet one should pass on, through further stages of the journey, to the state of utter isolation, utter perfection : *kaivalya*.

In the *sutras* of Patanjali :

"For the discriminating the perception of mind as Atman ceases.

Then bent on discriminating, the mind attains the previous state of *Kaivalya* (isolation).

The thoughts that arise as obstructions to that are from impressions.

Their destruction is in the same manner as of ignorance, egoism, etc.

Even when arriving at the right discriminating knowledge of the essences, he who gives up the fruits, unto him comes as the result of perfect discrimination, the *Samadhi* called the cloud of virtue.

From that comes cessation of pains and works.

Then knowledge, bereft of covering and impurities, becoming infinite, the knowable becomes small.

Then are finished the successive transformations of the qualities, they having attained the end.

The changes that exist in relation to moments, and which are perceived at the other end (at the end of a series) are succession.

The resolution in the inverse order of the qualities, bereft of any motive of action for the *Purusha*, is *Kaivalya*, or it is the establishment of the power of knowledge in its own nature."

In this state of the HIGHEST SELF-ABSORPTION, KAIVALYA, at one time, Shiv put himself and thereby caused in all the three worlds a many-faceted upheaval, an upheaval so remarkable that the world has been puzzled and stays puzzled at the complete *volte-face* of all preceding philosophy and practice which it occasioned.

However, before we turn to Shiv's story, let us study, and in some detail, the other protagonist of the Cosmic Play, namely *Woman*.

In this field of *Yog* she has a place all her own. Long before Patanjali defined and described this way, *Raj Yog*, in this systematic manner other Indian sages and seers had taken to it to reach the Ultimate. These *yogis* found many obstacles and hindrances in their path, but none more potent than Sex, than, for the male, the female, who—worse still—often came not as a hindrance but as an attraction too powerful to be overcome easily. For what she offered was sexual desire, youth and beauty, all rolled into one, to say nothing of the flattery of one's ego through her profession to belong to the male wholly, as a slave for this life and ever. What man would turn from such paradise ? What paradise for which one often undertook *Yog*-practices would offer anything better than this bliss of desire fulfilled which even the gods, nay the highest God, yearned after !

3

Hindrances and Attractions

> *"They breathe in joy : but we—alas that fate*
> *Made woman's love so fair !*
> *For love restrains us in a world we hate,*
> *Cajoled by woman's snare."*
>
> *—Bhartrihari*

IN THE MATTER of thinking out problems and issues of life systematically the ancient Hindus were, obviously, a thorough-going people. They displayed a passion for examining and investigating whatever they took up, to the last detail and, sparing no pains, and exhibiting not the least sentimentality, tracked things back and forth, both to their source and conclusion. Such an attitude helped in taking, as we have seen, two vital steps. In the first place, the goals and ideals were made clear. We who take things for granted do not form a correct idea of what labour and thought must have gone into determining the right aims and objects of human existence. After all, it is of the utmost importance in every field of human endeavour that the objective should be clearly laid down. How much more important then would it be to arrive at a right idea of the aim of life itself ? Much confusion, which had obtained earlier, was weeded out through this illuminated enunciation of the goal of existence. Those who moved through life at least knew now what they were striving for.

Secondly, these sages strove to find out and indicate the right path.

On this matter also, the wise ancients spent all the time and attention necessary, and, several workable theses were put forth. Of the ways suggested, an important one was that of *Yog* and, as we saw in the preceding chapter, a clear exposition of this way is available in the *Yog-Sutras* of Patanjali. The various stages of the journey towards the goal were pointed out to the way-farer and much light thrown at how each limb of this eight-portioned science—or philosophy—led to the other, and the higher, stage. Only by degrees, through consolidating that which had been gained earlier, did the *sadhak* arrive at the top rung of this ladder, where the individual soul was ready to take flight and merge into the supreme Spirit!

And so the goal was clearly defined and the way clearly described. All that remained now was for the individual to make the journey, and the destination, successfully. Of course, this was more easily said than done. Indeed, it is one of those things, this *Yogic* path, of which one may say, without exaggeration, that fools rush in where angels fear to tread. There is no doubt that many are the angels, or angel-like beings, who have walked and would walk on this razor's edge, this path of *Yog*; yet he who would tread it has to be extremely alert. As one goes higher the path becomes narrower and straiter, and a false step would lead, as in a game like 'Snakes and Ladders', to a terrible fall. What is more, on the way there is a variety of pitfalls, which impede one's progress and even make one suffer utter defeat and disgust. These are generally put under the head—'hindrances and attractions'. For, and though seemingly contrary, both these serve the same purpose, that of distracting us from our march towards the object of our *sadhana*. They are only apparently opposed one to the other, but in effect they should be regarded as complementary. The hindrances proper are unpleasant phenomena. Thus, for instance, in the epics we find frequent mention of the demons interfering with and disturbing the *yagya* or the *Yogic* practices of the sages. Again, there is the philosophic kind of hindrance such as is usually denoted by this body of clay which encages the soul, this flesh of ours, with all the ills to which it is heir, which imprisons our spirit. This is such a potent hindrance that in the opinion of some, we cannot, just cannot, attain *nirvan* or *mukti* so long as we are what we are, so long as our soul is a co-partner, in its sojourn on earth, with our body. In his play, *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare speaks of this charmingly enough :

> "There's not the smallest orb which thou be-hold'st

But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins,—
Such harmony is in immortal souls ;
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in we cannot hear it."

Yes, the soul cannot achieve such grace as salvation, while encaged in and afflicted with the human body. Both the gross and the subtle bodies serve as terrible obstacles. If we are healthy, the body and the blood are full of vitality and energy which seek outlet on the material plane and go in for action, *karma*, which leads us deeper and deeper still into the mire, and binds us faster to the wheel of life and to the cycle of birth and re-birth. If the body is sick and unhealthy, all our care is concentrated on the cure of our sickness. The flesh, in general, needs and takes so much of our attention and action, and the gratification of the senses requires, and receives, so much of it that one has little interest left for anything else. In addition to the senses, our enemy, the body, has a still more formidable weapon, namely, the mind. Built of the subtlest matter, the mind is almost a personification of restlessness and, through its own disease and tyranny, it constantly drags us here and there, and thus diverts us all the time from our great quest.

The total situation then is this. The body has its physical requirements, has its own hungers and its problems of hot and cold and work and rest and so on. It leads us the dance of life because of its own basic material needs. The search for food can be in itself a whole-time job. Added to that is the sexual urge which is the cause of terrible diversion from the more serious pursuits of our soul. Similarly, the mind which is subject to the five affecting emotions of the undesirable type viz. *kam*, *krodh*, *lobh*, *moh*, and *ahankar*, puts us through such steps that we can hardly think of the soul and its true needs. Put together, the body and the mind create around the soul a veil or a wall of such depth and darkness that we can hardly pierce through it in several lives, if at all.

The real hindrances, therefore, are our body and mind ; and whether we have, on the way, obstacles like the demons that interfere with our *yagya* or attractions of various kinds which are placed on the path to lure the senses, they all serve the same purpose, of causing obstruction. In a well-known Greek story, Atalanta, the Swift, who could not be won against in a race by any one normally, is ultimately defeated by a youth who scatters along the way, and one by one, three golden apples which she stops and stoops to pick up, thus losing valuable time and the race. This exploitation of her avarice for defeating her, is a good example of how an attraction may prove to be a hindrance. Our greed for gold or our desire for beauty, our need for love or our hunger for praise or our thirst for glory---even our quest for salvation—all these attractions would be curses in disguise and not blessings.

It is delicious to be, to quote Keats,

"Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath."

Even Milton is tempted into asking :

"Were it not better done as others use
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair ?"

And yet nothing would be more distasteful than to be caught in that snare for fools which beauty is, which love is, which, for man, woman is. The attraction of Woman as hindrance is, in fact, a stock case in the realm of *Yog*. We saw that in the myth of the churning of the Ocean, Vishnu used the illusion of beauty and sex to deceive the demons and deprived them of their share of nectar through this trick. Indra actively uses *apsaras* to bring about the fall of the *yogis*. There are innumerable examples and stories which emphasise this point. Indeed, the woman beautiful has been used so often and so much to serve as an attraction that she is, attraction incarnate, is *akarshini*.

No wonder that the *yogi* dreaded her. When Anand, the Buddha's favourite disciple, asked the Master, "How shall we behave before women ?", he had answered : "You should shun their gaze, Ananda". "But if we see them, Master, what then are we to do ?" "Not speak to them, Ananda". "But if we do speak to them, what then ?" "Then you must watch over yourselves, Ananda".

And he summed up his view of the female of the species in no uncertain terms : "Women are soon angered, Ananda ; women are full of passion, Ananda ; women are envious, Ananda ; women are stupid, Ananda."

And, "Unfathomably deep, like a fish's course in the water, is the character of women, robbers with many artifices, with whom truth is hard to find, to whom a lie is like the truth and the truth is like a lie...No heed should be paid either to their likes or to their dislikes."

And Bhartri Hari came out with a matching description : "Whirlpool of doubts, home of immodesty, harbour of cruel deeds, treasury of faults, made of deceit, a mine of double-dealing, blocking the door of heaven, the gate of hell, a casket of illusions, why was woman created of poison and nectar, the snare of all things living ?"

And, the myth of the creation of Woman tells us this :

"In the beginning, when Twashtri (the divine Artificer) came to the creation of woman he found that he had exhausted his materials in the making of man and that no solid elements were left. In this dilemma, after profound meditation, he did as follows : He took the rotundity of the moon and the curves of creepers, and the clinging of tendrils, and the trembling of grass, and the slenderness of the reed, and the bloom of flowers, and the lightness of leaves, and the tapering of the elephant's trunk, and the glances of deer, and the clustering of rows of bees, and the joyous gaiety of sunbeams, and the weeping of clouds, and the fickleness of the winds, and the timidity of hare, and the softness of the parrot's bosom, and the hardness of adamant, and the sweetness of honey, and the cruelty of the tiger, and the warm glow of fire, and the coldness of snow, and the chattering of joys, and the cooing of *kokila*, and the hypocrisy of the crane, and the fidelity of the *chakrawaka* ; and, compounding all these together, he made woman, and gave her to man."

Confronted with woman as hindrance or attraction, several reactions are possibly and have been in evidence. In trying to fight against her, a man usually breaks himself, for he fights against his own self, tortures and torments his mind and flesh to get over this powerful urge. Far from being removed, it becomes an obsession so that the real purpose is defeated. Such has been the case with innumerable ascetics. By the same token it is found that quite often when one thought that one had mastered this all-powerful instinct, in point of fact what had happened was that it had been driven down and deep into one's subconscious so that the moment an opportunity offered, the repressed desire welled and upsurged like a tremendously forceful spring of waters. Repression and supression rather than true control or taming of the instinct—this is what happened. Perhaps Oscar Wilde is right when he says that the only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. To reduce the extraordinary, or seemingly so, to the ordinary—this is what ought to be attempted. A Krishn had his innumerable wives—all representing woman, who was thus, instead of being put in front, put behind, leaving the course open. Earlier, too, when the *gopis* would not let him depart for Mathura to perform the duty for which he had incarnated himself, when they obstructed the way by flinging themselves in front of his chariot, saying, "We shall not let thee go, we shall lie down in thy path", he had calmly told the charioteer to drive on. In course of time, he would act the charioteer to Arjun and equally calmly tell him not to waver in the discharge of his duty through getting caught in the snare of infatuation, but to proceed with the business of killing, for killing was what had to be done.

This does not mean that keeping women around one, whether as wives or otherwise, will necessarily make one invulnerable and proof against all temptation. Indra had a wife and all those

> "Delicious girls of heaven whose beauties ease
> The labour of the battle-weary gods."

At his command they would go forth to capture and conquer the hearts of *yogis*, yet even he could not resist the wicked desire of seducing Ahalya, the perfect woman.

One, and an excellent, way of getting over this temptation was to match woman with woman. This is what Narayan did, when Indra tried to make him fall from grace.

This foremost of the *rishis* sat practising the way which leads to the knowledge of Self. Possessing perfect tranquillity, and, in reality, far from any such intention, he was, however, suspected of the desire to usurp Indra's heaven. A terrified Indra sent Kamdev with his usual attendants to make the sage fall and fail. With a bevy of beautiful nymphs, and attended upon by soft breezes and Spring, Kam sought out to disturb the sage's mind with the arrows of amorous glances of the *apsaras*. Such was the power of Narayan that far from feeling disturbed in any way, the sage made the visitors tremble with fear. Understanding what Indra had suspected, Narayan spoke to Kam and his companions without any anger :

"Be not afraid—Accept our hospitality and grace this hermitage by your presence."

Kamdev and the others were impressed by the sage's total invulnerability, and wholly taken aback by the sweet and gentle treatment which they had received. Full of genuine praise for him Kamdev said: "Some people are not vanquished by us when we attack them with hunger or thirst; with cold or heat or rain or atmospheric control, or through their palate or sexual desire and other obstacles on the *yogi's* way, which, like endless oceans, are so difficult to cross. And yet they lose their temper and, through falling victims to futile anger, forego the fruit of their hard austerities. Verily, they are like persons who having crossed oceans get drowned in a hollow caused by a cow's hoof."

Narayan then produced, through his *yogmaya*—magic of *Yog*—and displayed, women of wondrous beauty, adorned with all manner of ornaments, waiting upon him humbling thus still further the pride of Kam and his retinue of celestial damsels. As beautiful as goddess Lakshmi were these and when those females of Indra's heaven saw them, they were enchanted by the fragrance of their loveliness and found their own beauty pale in comparison. Smilingly, Narayan offered Kamdev and others to choose and take away with them any one of these whom they liked. They selected Urvashi, the best of them all, and with them she went.

In the story of the Phantom and the Nun the Buddha humbled the pride of Rupananda and taught her the lesson of the impermanance of beauty through similar means.

This young sister of the Buddha was so beautiful that she was known as Rupananda. Though not 'converted' to the Faith, Rupananda had one day gone, out of curiosity, to hear the Buddha. She had gone *incognito* but the Master knew all.

When she entered, the Buddha created, through his supernatural powers, a young woman of about sixteen. Incidentally, not in India only but all the world over, sixteen for woman is, somehow, youth and loveliness at its supreme: "Age? Sixteen. The very flower of youth", thus Terence in his *Eunuchus*.

To revert, this phantom woman produced by the Buddha was surpassingly beautiful. Wearing crimson garments and adorned with ornaments she stood before the Master swinging a palm-leaf fan back and forth. Taking her place among the nuns, Rupananda saw the phantom and was taken aback. The face of her 'rival' was glorious as the full moon, and, compared to her, she felt like a crow standing before a royal goose of golden hue. And now began the education of Rupananda. The phantom was transformed first from a maiden of sixteen to a woman of twenty and thereafter into a woman who had given birth to one child, and then to a middle-aged woman, and finally into a decrepit old woman, with teeth broken, hair grey, body bent and forced to lean on a cane and trembling in every limb. All this filled Rupananda with disgust even as, years earlier, the sight of an old man had affected young Gautam. Had he not at that time cried out:

"But shall this come to others, or to all,
Or is it rare that one should be as he ?'
'Most noble', answered Channa, 'even as he,
Will all these grow if they shall live so long.'
'But', quoth the Prince, 'if I shall live as long
Shall I be thus; and if Yasodhara
Live fourscore years, is this old age for her,
Jalini, little Hasta, Gautami,
And Ganga, and the others ?"

And yet the Master brought about further intensification of Rupananda's sense of disgust through making the phantom woman a victim of disease. Throwing away her cane and her palm-leaf fan she screamed aloud, fell upon the ground and rolled over and over wallowing in her own urine and execrement. Rupananda was consumed with utter disgust, but the Buddha, mercilessly went on to show the final phase of our life. The body began to bloat straightaway. From its "nine wound-like openings oozed pus into the shape of lamp-wicks and also worms." Crows and dogs fell on the dead body and tore its flesh away. Rupananda thought: "Even so to this body of mine, will come old age, disease and death." To this visual wisdom, the Buddha added the following verbal lesson:

"Behold, Nanda, this assemblage of elements called the body;
It is diseased, impure, putrid; it oozes and leaks;
  yet it is desired by simpletons.
As is this body, so also was that; as is that body,
  so also will this body be.

Behold the elements in their emptiness; go not back to the
world;
Cast away desire for existence and thou shalt walk in tranquillity."

The Buddha was a perfect *yogi* and had been able to ward off all attacks of *Mar* including the temptation through his three daughters:

"And round him came into that lonely place
Bands of bright shapes with heavenly eyes and lips,
Singing in lovely words the praise of love
To music of invisible sweet chords...
So sang they with soft float of beckoning hands,
Eyes lighted with love-flames, alluring smiles;
In wanton dance their supple sides and limbs
Revealing and concealing like burst buds
Which tell their colour, but hide yet their hearts.
Never so matchless grace delighted eye
As troop by troop these midnight dancers swept
Nearer the Tree, each daintier than the last,
Murmuring, 'O great Siddartha! I am thine,
Taste of my mouth and see if youth is sweet!' "

He had been utterly unmoved, and answered:

"Pleasure is brief as a flash of lightning
Or like an Autumn shower, only for a moment...
Why should I then covet the pleasures you speak of?
I see your bodies are full of all impurity:
Birth and death, sickness and age are yours.
I seek the highest prize, hard to attain by men—
The true and constant wisdom of the wise."

Nothing shows more conclusively that it has been a man's world than the Buddha's attitude to Woman, than the abuse hurled, generally, on her in the name of her being an ally of the devil and a temptress. As if sex were only a one-sided game and the male, poor victim, were otherwise an innocent creature, who would opt for chastity, would never have fallen as low as to indulge in such animal activity! Part of the reason why such a concept became current is the Christian and Muslim view of the matter. So far as Hinduism and Buddhism are concerned, a major cause is the noise and clamour, complaining and bewailing, of the *yogi*, the would-be conqueror of Self, who finds, again and again, that this is where he is really vulnerable. Of a hundred men who would set out to rise above desire, ninety-nine were doomed to fail, for this reason or that, but most of all because of the sexual urge. Temptation ultimately got summed up in one word: Sex; and since for Man it was Woman who represented that, she got a lot of besmirching on this account. Now that woman has learnt to think for herself, is seeking self-expression and is becoming increasingly the mistress of her own life and fortune, the story is bound to grow a little less imbalanced. Indeed, it is possible that not before long there would be an equally pointless plethora of accusations which Woman will hurl on Man as the seducer and the tempter, as the villain of the show. However, this study is concerned primarily with the problems of the *yogi* and so let us accept his view of the matter. Bhartri Hari summed up this view for all *yogis*:

> "What use is there in talking a great deal of nonsense and incoherent prattle? There are only two things worth the devotion of man in this world: either the youth of beautiful women who are ever eager to taste sensual enjoyments, annoyed as it were, with the burden of their full-developed breasts, or the forest (hermit's life)."

Or, again,

> "you should either go to the Ganga and take your abode on her pious banks quite capable of purifying your soul of all previous sins, or you should devote yourself to the charming breasts of young women adorned with beautiful necklaces."

Of course, the hindrances one met on the way were all bound with our senses and, therefore, they would be most potent when they came in a shape which offered satisfaction to all the senses. In time to come, the *Panch makars*, five m's, of the *Tantriks* would fully cover this approach: meat and fish to eat, and wine to drink, and dance to gladden the eyes, and, finally, the female who combines, as poetry combines all the arts, all the attractions at one place. To quote Bhartri Hari, once again:

"What is the best of sight? The face of a satisfied girl.
The best of odours? Her breath. Of sounds? Her voice.

> The best of tastes ? Her lips. Of contacts ? Her body.
> The best of thoughts ? Her beauty. She entrances every sense."

Embracing her, the *mithun*, was thus the culmination of sensual bliss. All that remained to be done was to convert this sensual bliss into spiritual joy. If only one could do that ! Then this conflict, this cause of all torment and of failure, should cease to be.

For the *yogi*, another 'goal' came in sight and the *Tantriks* later on developed techniques which enabled one to master lust through lust. The *Panch makars*—five m's—philosophy, which we shall discuss later, was a first-class answer to resolve the conflict. In course of time, things would come full circle so that Vashishth, a *yogi* of the old style, would find—so we learn from the *Chin-achar* traditions—the Buddha, who had once regarded Woman as vile, and *Mar's* ally, surrounded by women, "for women were life, women were deities". And this was to be true not for the Buddhists alone, but for the Hindus also. For the latter, the hero's role in this new development was played by the great god, Shiv, *Yogi* of *yogis*.

4

The Mahayogi

> *"I bow to the three-eyed Rudra, who wields the excellent Pinaka, to Him Who is worshipped by Vishnu, Brahma, Indra, Surya, and other Devas, I bow again and again."*
>
> —*Mahanirvan Tantra*

THE HINDU *Trimurti*, consists of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiv, representing, respectively, the principles of Creation, Preservation and Destruction. Such is the conventional view of the matter. Since Brahma, having created the universe, can do nothing and must let the universe function in accordance with the law, comparatively little notice has been taken of this god in later theological development. They say that the god set about creating and went on creating but nothing would satisfy him. Gods and goddesses created he, and men and women, animals of all kinds and birds and vegetables, fish in the waters and insects in the air, the stars and the sun and the moon, and all manner of things and beings; but nothing helped still and becalm his feverish urge or his restlessness. Then he created *Dharm*, the law, and lo and behold! he was at peace with himself, for he knew now that things would be in accordance with the Law. Satisfied with himself truly, Brahma could sit back and watch creation at work, in strict conformity to the Law that he had made. He did not realise that since he could not or would not interfere with the law, could neither give nor take away aught beyond that which was fixed, the people would stop caring about a deity whom they could neither receive a favour from nor fear on any account. It is not difficult to understand why in India there should be only a little temple or two of Brahma, while sanctuary after glorious sanctuary has been raised to the other two gods, Vishnu and Shiv.

Apart, however, from the conventional view, it should be remembered that the word, Shiv, means 'auspicious', and the belief that Shiv is only god of destruction and can give nor grant any boon or favour, is, strictly speaking, not correct. It is only in the over-all regulation of the working of the universe that he represents the element of destruction. If we categorise *Prakriti*—Nature—in accordance with the three different essences, namely, *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, the pure noble, the heroic passionate and the dark evil, respectively, then God with *Sattva* is Brahma, with *Rajas* He is Vishnu and with *Tamas*, Shiv. Therefore, to regard one as superior to another is meaningless. None the less, devotees would be devotees, and although their gods smile about it, they fight it out among themselves. The devotees then have their own version of the matter and for those who worship Shiv, he would be the supreme god. There is that well-known legend that about Brahma and Vishnu, each of whom suffering from illimitable conceit, thought that he was supreme. To mystify them and to humble their pride, Shiv assumed the form of a shaft or a pillar. Seeing this strange thing appearing suddenly, and from nowhere, Brahma and Vishnu decided to explore it. One went up and the other went down to find the end of this phenomenon but they never reached either end. The myth only proves the *illimitablness* of the god Shiv and his superiority over these two. The shaft is *lingam*, the world pillar, or the sacred-fire etc.

However that be, Shiv has always been a most important god and a many-aspected one. One most important aspect of this god is his association with the concept of duality; and unity in duality, through the *Shakt* philosophy. Thus he represents the male aspect in nature while Parvati symbolises the female essence. Their polarity is merely an illusion so that *Ardh-narishwar*, Shiv androgynous, half-male and half-female, symbolises the essential one-ness of these two. For the ignorant and the unseeing, however, they appear as two and create the illusion of duality. In the Cosmic Play, they part to meet and meet to part. Their union and separation spell the motion and stillness of the world, to which we are bound. At the time of the story with which we are concerned, the phase is that of separation or at least physical separation, though, naturally, in his *Samadhi*, the god would be obsorbed in himself which is also herself, the Self of the goddess, his *shakti*, his active, positive aspect as against the dormant, the negative aspect, his own. At the point at which this part of the world-play caught him, he was particularly still.

The great god, Shiv, is, in the opinion of many, the earliest god of India because references to him are found—so it is claimed—in the Indus Valley period. We come across images belonging to that period which point to worship of what roughly conforms to the *lingam*, emblem of Shiv. And right from the beginning, the Aryans had had to take notice of an alien god, who would be later admitted to the fold. The seed for the development of Shiv may or may not be found in the concept of Rudra of the Vedic pantheon, but there is no doubt that the worship of the phallus is an ancient cult. Certainly, there was a tribal god of the poor, a mendicant god, with a special weakness for the down-trodden. Possessing magical powers and charms, he wandered about distributing health and happiness. He did not care for his looks nor about what company he kept. He preferred to stay poor, as a god of the poor should. Also, he was a *yogi* and had a tremendous capacity for *tapas*, penance. In addition, Shiv was lord of the beasts, *Pashupati*.

Of course, Hindu thought counted man among the beasts, long before Darwin came out with his theory of Evolution. In fact, the term *Pashu*, derived from *Pasham*, bondage, covers all who are caught in life's fetters. This *Pasham*, which binds the soul, is made up of our deeds and the play of illusion. The former, our deeds, defile the soul. This defilement considerably lessens, if it does not wholly darken, the light of our soul, namely our intelligence. Consequently, the *Pashu* cannot comprehend or recognise its true nature, its essential oneness with Shiv. The god's grace won through our devotion to him or through *Yog* helps us rend the veil of illusion as well as cleanse the soul of the defilement caused through deeds.

To revert to Shiv. Yet another group of people whose patron deity he was were the huntsmen. And though hunting and dancing, one a 'wild' activity and another a 'cultural' pursuit, do not go together, Shiv was also *Natraj*, the god of dance, and often danced in ecstasy. Traditionally associated with the Himalayas, the Kailash mountain was his abode and there, at times, the *yogi*-god might be found in a state of self-absorption, *samadhi*.

Shiv would roam all over India and frequently passed through the area around present-day Rishikesh and Haridwar, where, with Kankhal as his capital, Prajapati Daksh ruled. One of the daughters of this king, named Sati, had heard praises of the god, Shiv, and was so carried away by talk of his glory and greatness that she fell in romantic love with him and would marry none else. Her father was completely opposed to this 'unequal' match between a dainty princess, his daughter, and this penury-stricken, wild-looking wanderer. But the girl was firm in her resolve and in spite of her father's unwillingness and opposition, got married to Shiv and went away to live with him in far-off Kailash. Her father neglected her totally ; and though Sati was prepared for this, she was hardly happy about it. One day, she learnt that her father was going to perform a *yagya* to which he had invited all the gods and all the great kings of the earth and all his daughters, and sons-in-laws, except herself and her husband. She was filled with an intense longing to go and attend the function. Naturally Shiv did not like her going there uninvited, but she insisted and went to her father's home. She was so poorly dressed and looked so much out of place in that company, where all her sisters shone resplendent in costly costumes and precious jewellery, that her father roundly abused her husband for his poverty and lack of means to provide for his wife decently. His words were so full of disrespect for her husband that Sati could not tolerate all this abuse and dishonour and, from sheer shame, immolated herself then and there.

When Shiv heard of the tragic end of Sati, he was beside himself with rage and despair. Insane with grief, he came to the place of Daksh. Already, the people there, having resolved to take revenge, had put Daksh and many another to death. Shiv came and, caring naught for anyone or anything else, picked up the dead body of Sati and, putting it on his shoulder, went about like one who was struck with inconsolable sorrow. To relieve him of his burden and anguish, Vishnu, the Compassionate, made use of his quoit and Sati's dead body was cut into fifty-two pieces. These pieces fell all over the land and wherever a portion of Sati's body fell, there a *pith* was established and worship of Sati, the goddess, instituted. Relieved of his load, the god now lapsed into a strange aversion towards the world and, taking his seat on a peak on the Kailash, became completely oblivious to everything in the universe. Exercising *pratyahar*, he withdrew himself from thought of all else ; and, concerning himself only with his own Self, he went into a total trance.

In his great play, *Kumarasambhava*, Kalidas gives a description of Shiv in this state :

"Restraining his passions the three-eyed God sat firm and steady in a *Virasan*, the Hero's posture, on an altar of fir-tree with a tiger-skin laid over it.

His clotted hair were tied up with snakes and with double strings of berries fixed to his ears. He wore a knotted hide of black deer darkened still more by its adherence to the lustre of his neck.

From the stoppage of the inward vital airs, he appeared like a cloud without commotion, anterior to a shower of rain, like a reservoir of water without a wave upheaving, or like a flame unshaken in a place where there was no wind.

With his mind controlled by meditation and restricted from its functions through the nine doors, he was beholding himself in Himself, the spirit in the Spirit."

Endless ages passed and with the god of Destruction out of action, the world became an easy prey to the demons and other evil-doers, in general, and to one, Tarak by name, in particular. This evil being had, through his unparalleled austerities, reaped a harvest of virtue which enabled him to ask for a boon from Brahma himself. And the boon he asked for was that he should be invulnerable wholly. Of course, immortality could not be granted as that would have been infringement of the law. Brahma therefore offered that Tarak could choose the means and manner of his death. Feeling certain that Shiv would not ever marry again, this demon desired that he should die at the hands of Shiv's son, and, further, that his slayer should not be more than seven days old, which, again, would ensure that he who killed him would have to be a terribly terrible infant.

All this was granted. The demon grew still more menacing in his activities. The gods, who had already exhausted their power in battles against him, were now wholly at a loss to find a way out of this seemingly hopeless situation. So, they went to Brahma and prayed to him for succour. The god, bound as he himself was by Law, could only advise them that the solution lay in Shiv's marriage to Parvati, the daughter of Himalaya. The boy who could kill Tarak, would be born as their son. Since this was the only way, the gods immediately set to bringing about this marriage.

Now, Parvati was none else except Sati who had taken birth again in this form so that she might be reunited to one, and the only one, whom she had and would have for her husband. She was a beautiful, young maiden and was already greatly devoted to the god-*yogi*, Shiv. On him she attended daily with offerings and homage."

Little did she know that she was going to be the heroine of a great, cosmic drama, a drama that would cause an upheaval in the realm of philosophic thought. It would upset many an established view and value, and bring about an altogether new, and startling, synthesis of two, traditionally opposed, phenomena, *Kam* and *Yog*.

5

Devi as Kanya

"SALUTATION to Thee, O giver of blessings,
Dark Virgin, observant of the vow of chastity,
Whose form is beauteous as that of the rising sun,
And Thy face as that of the full moon."

—*Mahabharata*

ACCORDING to the traditional view of the matter projected in countless myths and legends as well as presented in philosophy and scriptures, sex was the enemy of the *yogi*; and, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, woman, representing sex became the symbol of this enmity. She was the stock weapon used by all those who wanted to keep the *yogi* from attaining *siddhi* through *tapas*. *Brahmcharya* is one of the means of *Yog* and perfect control, specially of sexual desire, is strictly enjoined upon the *sadhak*. Throughout the ages this has been the central thread of this philosophy, so much so that up to date, and in spite of other and contrary philosophies having been evolved during the interval, seers and sages continue to hold to this approach.

And although not everybody could become a *yogi* and take to renunciation, that, at least, was the ideal. In any case every man went about proclaiming, that if one could, one should take to this, better state. On the other hand, Nature was clear about her intentions. For Nature there was a purpose to be served by woman, and surely the work of creation must go on. And so countless females were always at hand for men to be attracted by. This attraction is at its maximum in that stage of life which is denoted by new youth.

It is obvious that if the goal set by a *maha-yogi* like the Buddha or by *yogis*, in general, was the right one, the world would, before long, move towards that aim. In practice, this may not be possible but it was bad enough that such an ideal should have been placed before others to strive for. We all try to reach perfection, and if perfection consisted in renunciation, then sooner or later, or, at least, logically speaking, work of the world would come to a stop. For the Supreme Cause of all causes, this would be an undesirable state of affairs. After all He had created the duality of the sexes in His wisdom. Since all that is under the Sun is good and for good, there is no question of such a stigma attaching for all time to the human female. Just as men are of different natures, so are women. Individuals, men as well women, differ; that is all. As among men, so there would be, among women, those of *Sattvik* nature as well as those who have a preponderance of the *Rajas* or the *Tamas*. Unfortunately, woman was regarded, generally speaking, as the lower kind in the human species and linked more with the *Rajas* and the *Tamas* than the *Sattvik*. Additionally, a situation had developed in which the god, Shiv, had completely withdrawn himself into Himself and that had caused a great deal of trouble for the world. It is true that this state had been brought about in consequence of an 'attachment' to woman, Sati, his wife who had immolated herself. Nevertheless, at the moment he was averse to life, averse to all other women, was in no mood to re-marry and sanction the male-female relationship, which was the very basis of creation. As a result of Shiv's ceasing to carry out his own duty, that of destruction of which he was the god-in-charge, a demon called Tarak had, as we saw, become so powerful and over-bearing that the gods were hard put to it and had suffered defeat and much disgrace on his hands.

Now the purposes of Divinity are so well looked after that quite often a single act brings about a manifold achievement. To take care of this multi-sided situation, therefore, it was decided that the goddess should be born as Himalaya's daughter, as *Kanya*, Virgin, whom Shiv would marry.

Sati, who had died to vindicate her husband's honour, now prepared for rebirth. She was taking this birth to fulfil several, as yet undeclared, universal purposes and cosmic needs. Yet, so far as she was concerned, her incarnation related to her single-minded devotion to her former husband, whose only wife she would be yet once again.

We have stated earlier that for many men, woman symbolised all that was best and beautiful in the human-being. When the Almighty created her, he took things that were lovely and fragrant, things which were fine and gentle, things which were delicate and delectable, things which had light and brilliance, things which had softness and sweetness, and made them serve as ingredients for her making.

Yet not only these, for much that was contrary was also put in, and so woman is also hard and fickle, treacherous and unreliable, revengeful and full of guile, and, in short, is often all man's woe. Such, however, would be woman and not a goddess, certainly not the goddess that Parvati was. So far as she was concerned, she was flawless, all fine, 'full glorious'.

On her auspicious birthday, there was a shower of flowers and there was light and happiness all around. Growing day by day, like the lunar curve, she became the embodiment of beauty and light, like the waxing moon. The parents delighted in the sight of this divine daughter of theirs and the father was both purified and illumined by her as a lamp by a flame of exceeding luster. Meanwhile, the girl grew up, as girls will, playing with her companions and seeking joy in childish sport. And then, when she began to study, all the knowledge acquired in a former existence was speedily revived. Soon, she got to that wondrous stage, and life's best, youth.

Kalidas describes this in glowing terms :

"Her childhood over, she entered that age—youth—which is a natural ornament of a slender body, which is an instrument of mirth produced without use of intoxicating liquor, and which is the weapon of Kam, god of love, without flowers. Developed by fresh youth her body, became lovely in all parts, like a painting touched up by an artist's brush or like a lotus by the Sun's rays. Slender was the young damsel's waist, where three beautiful streaks were placed by fresh youth, like a ladder for the ascending of Kam. The lotus-eyed girl's dark-nippled breasts, of golden-white hue, pressed so close against each other that between them there was room not even for a lotus-stem-string. Getting to the moon the fickle goddess of Beauty did not enjoy the excellence of the lotus, and getting to the lotus, she had to do without the moon's splendour ; but from Uma's face, she received a two-fold delight, both of the lotus and of the moon. If a white flower could have been contained in a fresh leaf or a pearl in a transparent coral, it might have reflected her fair smile, whose lustre extended over her red lips. When she spoke with a voice that distilled nectar, the cuckoo sounded hoarse, in comparison, sounded like a discordant instrument being played. Indeed, it seemed as if the Creator of the universe had created her from a desire of seeing beauty concentrated in one place, providing a collection of exemplary substances set in their proper places."

Once in his rambles, the sage Narad saw this young virgin near her father and declared that she would be the one wife of Shiv and would possess, through love, half his body. The father was happy to hear that. He knew also that, though mature, Parvati had herself remained averse to accepting any one but Shiv as her husband. But how was that marriage to come about? The skin-clothed god sat in ascetic meditation on a peak of the Himalaya mountain. Himself the dispenser of the fruits of asceticism, there he practised penance because of some unknown desire.

But beware of Woman! For, where others fail, she will find a way. She sought out the god, and would worship him. Though she could be an impediment to mental abstraction, the *yogi* permitted this, for Parvati was desirous only to serve him. Was he out to prove that they alone are firm whose minds are not agitated even though the cause of perturbation is close by?

Anyway, she began to go to the god, daily to make her offerings and to pay her homage like a devotee to her God. Soon, however, the true battle of these divine contenders was to ensue, and the real purpose of this Cosmic play made known.

Every day she, of the beautiful hair, and plucking flowers for offering, expert in cleaning the altar, brought water fresh flowers and the *Kush* grass for the daily ritual.

It was as such a point in the story that Kam, having undertaken to help the gods, appeared on the scene. In accordance with Brahma's advice, Indra had sent for and persuaded the god of desire, to help in the task of subduing the *Yogi*; Kam, had carried all his celebrated flower-tipped arrows, and was, withal, accompanied by his ally, *Vasant*, Spring—the season when all Nature is disposed to be amorous.

The god of Passion took out one of his love-shafts and fitting it to his sugar-cane bow aimed it at the *yogi*. He would so time its release that it should strike home when the first object Shiv's eyes saw would be the dazzlingly beautiful and pre-eminently desirable daughter of Himalaya.

Imagine the scene. Thanks to Vasant, friend of Kam, all around it is a beautiful sight. Fragrance-filled flowers, of every hue; and music—of the humming of bees, the singing of the birds, especially, the cuckoo, and of the rills and rivulets—all added to the fetching background of the majestic mountains. And more than that there was this lovely damsel, the goddess as *Kanya*, young virgin, at that stage of life, the first flush of youth, when every female is beautiful and when even the ugliest of women will attract. Finally, there is the shaft of Kam, full-drawn and ready to pierce through the heart of Shiv! Everything appeared to be ideally set. Only, they did not know their adversary well enough.

Already seeing Shiv, Kam's hand had begun to tremble through fear, and the bow and the arrow had dropped from his hands. Just then appeared Parvati, as if to restore his almost-vanished valour by the beauty of her body. She was followed by two sylvan goddesses.

Seeing her who was perfect in all her limbs and, who, through her beauty, shamed even Rati, the flower-bowed god again promised to himself the success of his venture. Uma approached and Nandi announced that the daughter of the mountain had come with desire to serve. By a mere sign of the eye-brow, Shiv accorded admittance to Parvati. Flowers were scattered at the god's feet, and Shiv blessed her: "Mayst thou obtain a husband not having another wife."

Kam was all this while watching for a proper occasion for discharging an arrow, and fixing his aim at Shiv in Uma's presence, he often touched the bow-string. Then to the divine ascetic, Gauri offered a red wreath of fine *Mandakini* seeds—lotus seeds dried by the rays of the sun. As soon as out of regard for his humble servant, the three-eyed god began to accept this garland, the flower-bowed god, Kam, applied to his bow a never-failing arrow named Fascination.

Then like the ocean at the commencement of the Moon's rise, Shiv, even his firmness being a little lost, busied his eyes on Uma's face with lips like the *Bimba* fruit. Betraying the sentiment of love, with limbs like a resplendent young *Kadamb*, the lovely faced daughter of the mountain, too, stood bending and with her eyes cast down. Overpowering once again the distraction of his senses through self-control and desiring to determine the cause of the perturbation of his mind, Shiv looked around and saw

Kam all ready to strike, with his fist clinched at the corner of the right eye, and his beautiful bow stretched to the full.

In rage at this attack against his devotion, Shiv at once let a flashing fire, with its flame rising upward, issue out of his third eye.

The flame instantaneously reduced Kam, the god of desire, to ashes, for his widow, Rati, to lament over, and rue the folly of her dead husband's daring onslaught on this *yogi* of *yogis*. As for the latter, Shiv, he moved away, disregarding the lovely Parvati completely and making her feel deeply humiliated.

Having seen Kam burned in her presence, and finding her desire frustrated by this *yogi*-god, Parvati reproached her beauty. Then and there she resolved to outmatch this arrogant god in *Yogic* austerities, and to win him through his own weapon, *Yog*. She announced to her parents that she would take to hard penance—for Love's sake. This delicate flower, this ideal of feminine loveliness, going in for a life of austerity ! This was something which her mother could not accept at all and so she cried out : "Uma"—literally, "Oh ! No (not austerity)", thus giving her daughter a new name, Uma, by which the goddess is known in her aspect of the austere virgin. Uma, however, was in no mood to care for anything but her love, and nothing would shake her resolve. Beseeching and receiving her father's blessings, off she went to the forest to undertake such penance as would outdo that of her lover, and put the best of *yogis* to shame. Only, in this case, the objective was love, so that in myth and story, this would become the supreme example of passion's penance.

6

Passion's Penance

> "*How is it that in thy youth thou hast cast away ornaments and put on a garment of bark suitable for old age? Say if the Moon and the stars shining at night are intended for the dawn?*"
>
> —*Kalidas*

THE DESTRUCTION of Desire as well as of Woman was, to all appearances, complete. And yet, this was the darkest hour before the dawn, as the saying goes. For, from now on, a new phase was about to begin in which the view of and approach to these matters, of *Yog* and *Kam*, of romance and renunciation, were going to be entirely and most unexpectedly changed. Though Kam had been reduced to ashes and Parvati humiliated, and though seemingly all was lost, there were two auspicious aspects of the situation. First, the *Mahayogi* had already indicated, even if indirectly, an inclination to be favourably disposed towards the daughter of the Mountain. We noted that she had been in the habit of going to the god to offer worship. And he had not only graciously accepted the worship but even blessed her to the effect that she might obtain a husband not having another wife. This last time also, she had come beautifully attired and looking so lovely that she had put even Rati, Kam's wife, to shame. Attended by two sylvan goddesses as companions, she had brought an offering of flowers to put at the feet of him whom she had, in her heart and mind, chosen to be her husband. But as soon as out of regard towards his devotee, Shiv began to accept the offering, Kam had aimed his arrow at him. With his eyes buried on Uma's face Shiv's firmness was 'a little lost.' Of course, so far as Parvati was concerned, she was all love and hope. She did not know, this pure girl, that she had been drafted by the gods to act the heroine's role in what was a conspiracy against this divine *yog*i whom she adored. True, the god was soon able lo restrain his senses through self-control, and Kam was reduced to ashes by the fire which flashed forth from his third eye, that of wisdom. Nevertheless, the disturbance caused to the calmness of the *yogi's* mind, was the straw that showed the direction of the wind. Having quickly destroyed Kam, who had caused obstruction in his penance, like the thunderbolt breaks a tree, and trying to avoid the vicinity of Woman, Shiv had disappeared with his attendants, but even this indicated his vulnerability, or, at least, the possibility of being vulnerable.

Secondly, Parvati, virgin goddess, was not going to accept defeat. Though, she went home dejected she was determined to win, of course not through her beauty, for that had proved futile. What use is beauty if it does not produce graciousness and does not move one's beloved ? Shiv had destroyed the god of Love and spurned her and thus proved that both Love and Beauty were ineffectual. She was, therefore, going to accomplish 'effective' beauty for herself, by means of penance that should be extraordinary, for she would win a husband and a love that, too, were *extraordinary*.

When her mother learnt of this resolve of Parvati, she was utterly sorrow-stricken and embracing her with great affection, she tried her utmost to dissuade her from taking the vow of the sages. Not only she but anybody would have been struck by the contrast between the idea of penance and its hardship, on the one hand, and, on the other, of the loveliness and softness of the body of Parvati, a body that was more delicate than flowers. Nevertheless, there was no stopping Parvati from following her resolve, so firmly was her mind set on this object of her desire. She, therefore, sought permission of her father to take to penance and asked residence for herself in the forest. There she would stay in ascetic devotion which was to last until she had obtained her desire. The father gave permission to her and she went to the peak which later on came to be known by one of her names, Gauri; and there she began one of the strangest *sadhanas*, in the whole story of *Yog*.

So far, love had never been the object of any *Yogic sadhana*. Different *sadhaks* had gone in for different *sidhhis* and their objectives could and did vary from individual to individual, but it was never for love that *yogic sadhana* was resorted to. In most cases, it was to gain immortality or tremendous power or the grace of the Supreme Being, but no one ever took to *Yog* for obtaining some one in marriage, nor ever allowed love and desire, *prem* or *kam*, to be associated with penance. On the contrary, penance was often opposed to desire and was upset by desire, by sex, by passion for Woman. Indeed, the typical attitude was that which was displayed in the case of Shiv himself. The intention was to make him take marital interest in a particular female, and to that end his penance had been interrupted and his *samadhi* disturbed. And when he found that his meditation was being interfered with, he had put an end to the fount and spring of all desire, namely, Kam, himself, and also moved away from the vicinity of Woman, in this case, Parvati. This then was the traditional approach but now a being had resolved to take to penance as rigorous as that of any *yogi*. In this *sadhana* no concession would be asked and none given on account of the penitent's body being that of a woman, and that an exceptionally soft and delicate body, and used to royal comforts. And all this for love's sake. This new ascetic, this *yogini*, was not undertaking penance to get away from love and desire, was not striving to rise superior to the weakness of one's heart or the desire of one's body. In fact, the exact opposite was intended. It was to move not away from but towards love, towards fulfilment of desire, that this penance, harder than that of any other *yogi* was undertaken, and for no other, 'high' objective. Love was taking to *Yog*, for love's sake.

As we said, Parvati was not going to spare herself in respect of the severity of her austerities. In great poetry, Kalidas gives a description of what she underwent. Shorn of simile and metaphor, and the colour and music of Kalidas's verse, this is what happened. The necklaces of gold and pearls were thrown away and instead she covered her young body with a garment of bark. Her face which had once been made lovely by decorated hair was still as lovely, though the hair was now clotted. To indicate her vow, she wore a three-stringed girdle made of *munj* grass which every moment caused the unpleasant sensation of horripilation and reddened the site of the girdle-string. Instead of playing with a ball, she took to the rosary, and her fingers were often wounded by plucking *kush* flowers. There was no question of comfortable beds and cushioned seats. Her arm was her pillow and the bare ground her seat as well as bed. She grew in moral and religious merit so quickly that many sages began to resort to her. That penance-forest became sanctified. Nevertheless, she found that it was necessary to practise even more severe penance. Now she, who once got fatigued even with playing the ball, took to the conduct and practice of *munis*. For this her body proved to be capable, as if it were made of gold as well as lotus, possessing tenderness but also strength. In summer, she would surround herself by four blazing fires while she stood gazing at the scorching Sun, the fifth fire. She would take nothing except water, that reached her unasked—the rain water and the rays of the nectarine Moon. When summer was over and rains came, she would sleep on a stone outside in the midst of uninterrupted showers and wind. Her heart was so full of pity that she could not bear the separation even of the *chakravaks* and yet towards herself she was pitiless. She passed the whole night of winter, during which the winds scattered frost, remaining in water. They say that maintaining oneself on leaves of trees which have dropped by themselves is the greatest excellence of penance. She abandoned even that, and so came to be known as *Aparna*—'Leafless'. Afflicted by such vows day and night, she left behind and far below the penance of ascetics who had dependent bodies.'

Terrible, indeed, was her penance but now the end was in sight. As if in answer to the call of the heart that loved him, Shiv now came, came disguised in the form of a person with clotted hair, clad in black bear-skin, holding a *palash* stuff, bold in speech, and resplendent with Vedic light. He came to this *tapovan*, to chide her for undertaking penance—and what penance ! with such a delicate body. And then after much forewording he said, "Your birth is in the race of the primeval creator. Your body is as it were a collected beauty of the three worlds. The happiness produced from wealth need not be sought by you, and you are in the first flush of your youth. Tell me what other fruits of penance may be beyond this ? Is there any gross inequity which you wish to contend against ? But that is not possible for how can there be disrespect for you from any quarter ? Tell me why you have in your youth cast away ornaments and put this garment of bark which is suitable for old age ? If you desire salvation, your labour is useless. If you desire a bridegroom, then stop this ascetic practice. A jewel does not seek but is sought. Ah ! you utter a sigh ! Your penance then is connected with this last question, about the bridegroom. Still, my mind is full of doubt. I can see no one who is worthy of your desire. In any case, how can there be a person whom you desire and he should be unattainable ? Alas, there is some one, some youth you desire, who is exceedingly stern, so stern that he can disregard these matted hair hanging loosely by thy cheeks. O Gauri, how long will you mortify your body thus ? Come, I shall surrender half the fruit of my own penance in order that you may obtain your bridegroom. Tell me who he is."

Naturally, Parvati could not make any answer, but she motioned to her companion who said that Parvati had desired to obtain for her husband no less a being than Shiv, who having over-thrown Kam, was not to be won over by beauty. The arrow which the god of Desire had aimed at Shiv had been turned back and had afflicted her with a deep stroke in the heart. "From then on", the companion of Parvati contiued, "this young princess had been inflamed with such love that she never obtained any rest. And then she took to penance in the forest for obtaining the Lord of the Universe. I know not when he will take pity on her."

Without betraying any sign of joy the visitor exclaimed, "O ! Is it so or a joke ?" Then Uma answered, "It is as you have heard. I am ambitious of getting up to that height and this penance is but a miserable means of reaching there."

Then the ascetic said, "This great god is naught to me. I know that he delights in evil habits. And why are you so exclusively devoted to a body so despicable ? How will this lovely hand grasp Shiv's hand around which snakes are entwined. Who can imagine thy feet, which are generally set with clusters of flowers on the burial ground ? Will not people laugh at you, who ought to be carried by the king of elephants, when, after the marriage you ride an old bull, and when the god's embrace will put not sandal-paste but ashes of funeral pyre on your breast ? In my opinion, there is nothing whatsoever in Shiv who possesses a body with deformed eyes, whose origin is unknown and whose wealth is indicated by his nakedness, which is looked for in bridegrooms." Hearing this, Uma was furious and said angrily, "You know nothing about him. He is the refuge of the universe and is indifferent as to attire. He is poor yet he is the source of all wealth. Residing in the cemetery, he is yet the Lord of the Three Worlds. Terrific in appearance he is, yet they call him *Shiv*, auspicious-looking. Who can determine his form, for the Universe is his form ? For him it is all the same whether he be shining with ornaments or with snakes, and whether he has a skull in his hand or the Moon in his hair. The dust of the funeral pyre becomes sanctified through contact with his body. But—

though desiring to find fault—you have said one good thing. He, who is the cause even of the self-begotten god, how can he have any origin ?" Trembling with anger, she forbade her-visitor to speak any further, and asked her companion to put him aside, since not only he, who reviles a great person, is guilty but those also who hear him. But as she was about to go away, the ascetic assumed his true form and smilingly took hold of her. Parvati was arrested in her movement and heard the soft-sweet words which Shiv uttered, "O, Thou with body stooping, henceforward I am your slave bought by your virtrue." When Shiv said this, she immediately felt all her fatigue and exhaustion caused by austerity vanish, because one becomes refreshed by fruition of one's effort. Parvati then reminded him through her companion that her father, Himalaya, alone, could give her away and it were best for Shiv to ask him. To quote our poet :

"Then Gauri sent her companion to the soul of the Universe with the message, 'The Lord of mountains is my donor. Let him be recognised as authority in this matter.' "

Saying, "Be it so", the Chastiser of the god of Love thought of the seven highest sages, the same who, having created from the remains of creation, were regarded as old as the Creator. Though they were ascetics, they enjoyed the fruits of their stainless penance performed in their earlier births.

Illumining the firmament by their lustre, these great sages, to whom penance was wealth, and who were accompanied by Arundhati, immediately appeared before the god.

In keeping with form and decorum, Shiv praised the *rishis*, regarded as among the highest, and paid them rich but deserved compliments. The sages replied, "In truth, we are higher than both the Sun and the Moon but to-day, through the favour of being remembered by thee, we have risen higher still.

Although thou art seen visibly, we know thee not in thy real essence. Be pleased to describe and explain thy real form. Tell us, which of these (three) is thy real self ? That part by which thou createst the evolved Universe, or that by which thou preservest it, or the one which destroys the Universe ?

Yet ignore this lofty request of ours for the present. Command us rather, O, god ! we are here at your mental call. What may we do ?"

Shiv said, "None of my desires ever originate in self-interest. I have been beseeched by the demon-harassed gods to beget a son, as the cloud is beseeched by the *chatak* birds oppressed by thirst.

In order to beget a son, I wish to take Parvati in marriage, as a sacrificer fetches the wood to generate fire, and I desire that, on my behalf, you should ask Himalaya for her.

Start then for Oshadhiprasth, the city of Himalaya, for the accomplishment of this task. There shall we meet again, at the Mahakoshi cataract."

Finding Shiv, the chief of ascetics inclined to marriage, the Brahma-born sages were relieved of their sense of shame for having wives. They then set out to Himalaya's abode.

Vying in velocity with the mind, the great sages reached Oshadhiprasth. It was built, as it were, by replacing the town of Alaka, Kuver's Capital, and the home of wealth and plenty.

Encircled by the streams of the Ganges, with herbs glittering within the ramparts, with its walls of large jewel-stones and picturesque even in its fortifications, it was a town where elephants had overcome the terror of lions and where women were sylvan goddesses.

Here the desire-fulfilling trees, with shining garments fluttering on their branches, secured, without any attempt on the part of the citizens, the beauty of flags on staves in every house. To the women secretly going to their lovers, their way was shown here by the light of glittering herbs. Here life was a prolonged youth and there was no other lord of death than the flower-armed god, and sleep, brought on by sensual fatigue, was but a temporary suspension of sensation. Here lovers were turned into supplicants—until graced—by the feigned anger of women, in which there was contraction of the brow, quivering of the lip and threatenings with soft fingers. The outer garden of the city was the fragrant Gandhamadan in which the Vidyadhar ramblers rested under the shade of the trees.

In this town, the sages, the masses of whose matted hair looked as still as painted flames, and who were stared at with wonder by door-keepers with uplifted faces, alighted, with great speed, on the premises of the Mountain's house.

Coming down from the sky in a row, the sages arranged themselves in order according to seniority and shone like a row of suns reflected in water. Advancing from a distance to receive them, Himalaya welcomed them with due ceremony. Then he asked them why they had thus honoured him, and the sages replied :

"He, by whom this Universe is held, whom sages with true knowledge of the supreme Spirit seek.

That Svayambhu himself, the observer of the world's doings and the giver of boons, chooses your daughter (for his wife).

You should therefore unite him with thy daughter as meaning with word. Let all these creatures consider her as Mother; for the Lord is the Father of the Universe.

Having bowed down to the dark-necked god, may the gods then tinge her feet with the rays of their crest-gems."

Himalaya was all joy and said to Parvati, "Come, O Child ! Thou art designed as alms to the Soul of the Universe."

Fixing the time of the auspicious wedding-ceremony three days later, the bark-clothed sages took leave of Himalaya, and, as arranged, met the trident-holder god. They announced to him the success of their mission, and then re-ascended the heavens.

The Lord of the brutes was so eager for the company of the Mountain's daughter that he passed those three days with difficulty. "If they affect even the all-powerful" asks the Poet, "Whom else, subject to the senses, would these sentiments of love not disturb ?"

And why not ? Indeed, there was henceforth no point in resisting these sentiments of love. Let them disturb one as freely as they would. No longer will Kam and Shiv be enemies, nor *Bhog* the opposite of *Yog*. In the lovers' meeting, this ancient quarrel had ended for all time.

7

Alliance of Enemies

"Whoever after having done worship
Of Shri, Shripati, Parvati, Ishvar, Rati, and Kamadev,
Together with the (Shadang) Devata of the Devi,
Recites the (mantra) on Thy yantra,
Becomes a King among men."

—From the Tantrasar

THE MARRIAGE of Shiv and Parvati symbolised many things and heralded startling developments in the realm of religion and the field of philosophy. For one thing, it brought together in loving embrace what were regarded until now as sworn enemis, namely the *Kanya* and the *Yogi*. So far it was the declared aim and object of the *yogi* to control himself, specially in respect of *kam*—desire generally, and sexual passion in particular—and move towards his goal of self-realisation through avoiding all contact with this personification of desire, Woman. Time and again, the female, in the form of an *apsara* or a lovely woman, was employed by the gods to serve, through being an attraction, as an obstacle in the way of this realisation. She was the means whereby the *yogi's sadhana* could be interrupted, nay undone. Shiv, as the *Mahayogi*, was naturally greatly averse to all thoughts of love and marriage, and the victory of Parvati signifies, in a way, the victory of Kam, of romance over renunciation, of the positive forces of life working for creation and procreation, against the negative approach, of non-participation, which Shiv was intent upon. Who could have thought in the earlier phase, that Kam would one day be regarded as a friend of the *yogi*? This god, who had been treated by Shiv as an enemy at one time, got a new lease of life, and that of a kind of life which was altogether different from and far more honourable than Kam had ever known before. From now on sex ceased, as such, to be a hindrance in the way of salvation. In fact, it became, by itself, a way to, and the means of, salvation.

But we shall revert to this a little later. Let us first have done with what the marriage of Shiv and Parvati signified and symbolised.

This marriage sanctified the return of Woman to the world of men as divinity. Earlier, Woman had been regarded as vile, as evil, as an ally of the god, Kam, an enemy of man, a treacherous lure to keep us bound to life, an accessory of Mar, the Buddhist god of desire and death, and, in short, the net that keeps us in the web of illusion in which human beings get and stay caught. Now, she was worthy of worship. In the world of religion, she developed two new aspects. She became the representation and reflection upon earth of the goddess. Every female, specially every young girl, every virgin, became goddess-like and was so worshipped. Secondly, the goddess herself gained in status. Whereas, the goddess had not counted for much, in the ealier set-up, now she was not only an equal of and co-eval with God, co-sharer with Him of all power and glory, but, from the point of view of one set, she was herself the Creatrix, was the Deity, was 'God', above all gods. She was the active manifestation, and the male counterpart, Shiv, was only the passive aspect of God-head. The *Tantric* faith and dogma placed the Goddess on a pedestal which was higher than she had ever occupied. The hymns, sung in her praise in *Anand Lehri* or *Saundriya Lehri*, to name but two works containing these—were full of superlatives. To show the status now enjoyed by the goddess, one could quote almost at random, from these hymns:

In his *Anand Lehri*, Shankaracharya salutes her thus:

> "O BHAVANI, the four-headed Lord of creatures is not able
> to worship Thee,
> Nor even the five-headed destroyer of the Tripura,
> Nor the six-headed commander of the celestial hosts,
> Nor even the thousand-headed Lord of serpents.
> If, then, they cannot, tell me who else is able so to do?"

And this from *Mahishamardini stotra*, again from the *Tantrasar* :

> "O Chandi ! when the syllables, the letters of which speak of Thee,
> Reach the ear, then Brahma and other Devas
> Sing the truth, touching Purusha and Prakriti.
> O Devi ! be today gracious to me,
> Devoted as I am to the kissing of Thy beautiful lotus feet,
> The one and only glittering abode of the essence of the nectar of all Devatas."

And in the *Devi Bhagavat* Puran :

> "It is by Thy power only
> That Brahma creates, Vishnu maintains,
> And at the end of things Shiv destroys the universe.
> Powerless are they for this but by Thy help.
> Therefore it is that Thou alone art the Creatrix,
> Maintainer, and Destructress of the world."

And again, from *Bhairavi-stotra*, in the *Tantrasar* :

> "O Tripura, I take refuge at Thy lotus feet,
> Worshipped by Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshvar ;
> The abode of bliss, the source of the Vedas,
> The origin of all prosperity ;
> Thou whose body is Intelligence itself."

Once the goddess had been evolved in this new form, theories were thought up which presented new ritual and new dogma for salvation. The *Tantric* form of worship, the *panch-makars* (the five m's) ritual, in which woman and sex played such an important role, is proof of this new approach. The *Panch-tattv* (five-element) worship is a very subtle matter. Nevertheless, it may be briefly described to mean the return of the *material* as acceptable in the *spiritual* world. The dichotomy between matter and spirit, which had obtained so far, vanished, as if it were of no consequence, was something we had imagined but which in fact did not exist. This elaborate philosophy took note of the kind of man each individual was, and divided people into three different types, those with the *Pashu Bhav*, (Animal sentiment) *Veer Bhav* (heroic sentiment) and the *Sattva Bhav* (the pure sentiment).

Again, it took into consideration the fact that different men needed different kinds of treatment and must take to different types of *sadhna*. From this point of view the same nomenclature spelt different things depending upon the type of person for whom we were prescribing. For instance, wine is not literally wine for every body. For the *Pashu Bhav*, it has to be coconut water. For the *Veer Bhav*, it may be wine actually, but its use is severely regulated through absolutely explicit instructions. In the case of the *Sattva Bhav*, the highest and the purest and the cleanest type, the wine is the wine of true knolwedge which intoxicates one as no other wine can. Indeed, it is this, true knowledge, alone which makes for realization :

"Yoga is the unity of the embodied spirit and the Supreme Spirit; Puja is the union of the worshipper and the worshipped; but he who realizes that all things are Brahman for him there is neither Yoga nor Puja.

For him who possesses the knowledge of Brahman, the supreme Knowledge, of what use are *Japa*, *Yajna*, *Tapas*, *Niyama*, and *Vrata* ?

He who sees the Brahman, who is Truth, Knowledge, Bliss, and the One, is by his very nature one with the Brahman. Of what use to him are *Puja*, *Dhyana*, and *Dharana* ?

For him who knows that all is Brahman there is neither sin nor virtue, neither heaven nor future birth. There is none to meditate upon, nor one who meditates.

The Spirit which is detached from all things, is ever liberated ; what can bind Him ? From what do fools desire to be liberated ?

He abides in this Universe, the creation of His power of Maya, which is incomprehensible even to the Devas. He is seemingly in the Universe, but not in it.

The Spirit is in its own nature, the Eternal Witness, and like the Ether exists both outside and inside all things, and has neither birth nor childhood, nor youth nor old age, but is the mere Feeling Consciousness which is ever the same, knowing no change.

It is the body which is born, matures, and decays. Men enthralled by illusion, seeing this, understand it not.

As the Sun (though one and the same) when reflected in different platters of water appears to be many, so by Maya the one soul appears to be many in the different bodies in which it abides.

As when water is disturbed, the Moon which is reflected in it appears to be disturbed, so when the intelligence is disturbed ignorant men think that it is the Spirit which is disturbed.

As the void inside a jar remains the same even after the jar is broken, so the Spirit remains the same after the body is destroyed.

Self-knowledge, O Devi ! is the one means of attaining final liberation ; and he who possesses it, is verily—yea, verily—liberated in this world, even yet whilst living ; there is no doubt of that.

Neither by acts, nor by begetting offspring, nor by wealth is man liberated ; it is by the Knowledge of the Spirit, by the Spirit that man is liberated.

It is the Spirit that is dear to all ! there is nothing dearer than the Spirit ; O Shiva ! it is because the Spirit is One that men become dear to one another.

Knowledge, Known, Knower appear by Maya to be three different things ; but if careful discrimination is made, one Spirit alone is.

Knowledge is Consciousness ; the object of knowledge is Consciousness ; the knower is Consciousness. He who knows this knows the Self.

I have now spoken of Knowledge which is the true cause of final liberation."

The same sort of interpretation obtains for other essentials required in this form of worship. Consider, for example, Woman. For the *Pashu Bhav*, it is his own wife who partakes as *Shakti* in the ritual. The *Veer Bhav* may take, for the duration of the *chakra puja*, a woman, who may not be his wife actually, but only with prescribed rites and after due consecration. Explaining relevant verses of the *Mahanirvana Tantra*, Arthur Avalon offers the following clarification :

"Two forms of marriage are, Brahma (the usual kind) and Shaiva... The latter marriage is of two kinds, one terminated by the Chakra and the other lifelong. The persons so married are Shaktis. A Shakti again may be Pujya or Bhogya. The latter may be enjoyed and not the former who merely acts as Uttara-sadhika, that is, assists in the ritual the man whose Shakti she is. A Pujya Shakti is never for life. The Bhogya Shakti may be for life or for the Chakra only. In all cases some form of marriage precedes intercourse where it takes place. On verse 174 Tarkalamkara says that the Brahma wife is called Svashakti or Aparashakti (that is not Parashakt). The Shaiva wife is called Parashakti. The Brahma wife, if purified by Shaiva marriage ritual or taken as a Shakti in the Bhairavi-chakra, becomes a Parashakti. Parashakti should (he says) be treated as the Sadhaka's mother and as Divinity (Ishta-devata). If the thought of wife relationship (Bharyabhava) arises in the mind there is a' fall. Here (he says) Shiva has prohibited the last Tattva as wrong for men of ordinary intelligence and weak control over their desire (Kama). Such are not competent to take a Shakti. (This is not clear. But presumably what is meant is that they are not in a position to do Sadhana with a Shakti. For such a man the presence of a woman is rather an obstacle—Vighna—than a help). Those, however, who by Sadhana have conquered lust, may do Sadhana with Shakti. The Uttara and other Tantras say that after doing Sadhana with Svashakti and obtaining success (Siddhi) then, when the mind is free of temptation, Sadhana may be done with Parashakti. Guptasadhana Tantra says that 'in Kulachara the Siddhamantrin should worship (Prapujayet) the Kula women'.

I may add that the various grades of competency and Chakra must be considered. There are men who do Sadhana with a woman who never have sexual intercourse with her nor have thought of it."

For the *Sattva Bhav*, there is no question of physical union. For him, this term would mean union with the awakened *Kundlini*, in the uppermost part of the forehead where the *Sahasrar*, the thousand-petalled lotus blooms. It is in this sense that the *Tantric* concept of *maithun* should be understood.

Once Woman's position was re-established as an essential part of the world, she occupied not only her rightful place in the world but more, she became far more 'essential' than man—as Mother, as *Shakti*, as Force, as the Originator and the Creatrix, as 'God', worthier of worship than all the other gods. Many other developments followed automatically. The result was that a new approach to life was evolved, which can best be explained as the *Yog* of *Bhog*—a way in which pleasure became a form of penance, and self-indulgence, not self-denial, a means to union with God and to Realization.

So far, man had sought *nirvan*, liberation, and regarded many a 'good' thing of life, including sexual union, as hindrances. Now, all these hindrances of yesterday became aids to the obtaining of a much richer prize, *Mahanirvan*—the Great Liberation—and of all these aids, none was of a greater value than Woman. Indeed, she was the goal, and union with her was itself the great liberation, was bliss everlasting. Since this solution of an intricate problem, of man's most painful dilemma, had been wrought through Devi's grace, it was with the most heartfelt fervour that the devotee gave all his adoration to her. His being became so permeated with her that he saw Her everywhere, in all women, and, in particular, in all virgins. In course of time, every virgin became a personification of the goddess and was so worshipped. Symbolically, each virgin held the promise of new life, and ensured that Gods' work, the divine business of creation, would never cease. Naturally, Kam who, through disseminating and kindling desire all round, helped in the task was reinstated as worthy of homage, and neither Shiv nor any one of the countless lesser *yogis* of the world would ever again frown on the flower-bowed deity.

Let us refresh our memory about the *yogi's* one time position *vis-a-vis* Kam. Bhartri Hari—*circa* 7th century—dates this view for us, as well as enunciates it clearly. As we quoted earlier, "There are in the world but two things that men may cherish—either the youth of fair girls who yearn ever for the renewal of love's dallying, or else the forest-life."

Then, feeling sated of romance, he had turned to the way of renunciation, and escaped the snare of Kam and his means, Woman, and now praised Shiv: "Ho, Lord of Love! why weary thy hand with ever twanging the bow? Ho, sweet cuckoo bird! why warble in vain thy amorous songs? And thou, fair girl, turn otherwhere thy sly glances, charged with languorous spells and sweet allurements. Now is my mind plunged in the ambrosia of meditation at Shiv's feet."

Obviously, the realm in which Kam, Love, was Lord, and where a *kanya*, fair maiden, could allure one, was both different from and inferior to the world of Shiv's feet.

The former, Kam and *Kanya*, were the yogi's—why, all men's—foes. According to one etymological explanation, *kanya* is she who covets, desires, and is thus literally rooted in *Kam*. Though she might feign the reverse, feign modesty and bashfulness, she was innately inclined to the way of Kam. In any case, she was the lure, Kam used to catch men with:

"The sportive Love-god in this worldly sea
Angles continually;
And women are his hook, their luring lips
The bait that bobs and dips.

We greedy fools, like silly nibbling fish,
Are landed with a swish;
And then, alack! to end the cruel game
Are broiled on love's quick flame."

Such was the position until Bhartri's time, and, for the 'orthodox' *yogi*, is the position even today, It was, of course, not a wholly correct approach, for each god has his allotted work and virtue. Indeed, Kam had been, at one time, regarded as the greatest of gods. The Vedic sages praised him:

"Wide as the space which heaven and earth encompass, far as
the flow of waters, far as *Agni*,
Stronger than these art thou, and great for ever,
Kam, to thee, to thee I offer worship...
Not even *Vat* is the peer of Kam, not *Agni*,
Chandramas the Moon, nor *Surya*.
Stronger than these art thou, and great for ever,
Kam, to thee, to thee I offer warship."

And again,

"The all-devouring god whom men call Kam,
he whom they call the Giver and Receiver,
Invincible, pervading, wise, and mighty—to all these Fires be
this oblation offered."

And in the *Mahabharat*, when the Pandavas discuss the question as to which of the three aims of life—*dharm*, (duty, religion, virtue), *arth*, (worldly advantage, wealth, high position, etc.), and *kam*, (desire, enjoyment, love) is the highest, Bhim speaks thus: "Without *kam* a man has no wish for worldly profit, without *kam* a man does not strive after the Good (*dharm*), without *kam* a man does not love; therefore *kam* stands above the others. For the sake of *kam* the *rishis* even give themselves up to asceticism, eating the leaves of trees, fruits, and roots, living on the air, and wholly bridling their senses; and others bend all their zeal to the Vedas and lesser Vedas, making their way through the whole of the holy study, as also to ancestral offerings, and sacrificial acts, to alms-giving and alms-taking. Traders, husbandmen, herdsmen, craftsmen, as also artists, and those that carry out actions consecrated to the gods, give themselves up to their works because of *kam*. Others, again, take to the sea filled with *kam*; for *kam* has the most varied forms: everything is steeped in *kam*. No being ever was, or is, or will be, higher than the being that is filled with *kam*. It is the innermost core (of the world), O king of righteousness; on it is founded *dharm* and *arth*. As butter from sour milk, so *kam* comes forth from *arth* and *dharm*. For oil is better than the squeezed oil-cake and better melted butter than butter-milk. Better is the flower and the fruit than the wood, *kam* is more excellent than *arth* and *dharm*. As honey is the sweet juice from the flower, so *kam* is from these two, according to the teaching of tradition. *Kam* is the womb of *dharm* and *arth*, and *kam* makes up their essence. Without *kam* the manifold workings of the world would not be thinkable.

'Give thyself up to *kam*, take thy joy with women
In fair garb and ornament, and sweet to behold,
With young women loosed with the madness of drink;
For *kam*, O king, for us is greatest of all.' "

In any case, Kam, too, was created with a specific purpose in view and a great purpose, too—perhaps the greatest and the grandest—that of creation!

It was unwarranted, obviously, to depose him so crudely, to put him down to the level of all that was low and vulgar, and, for all his handsomeness—he is the handsomest of Hindu gods—and his flower-and-fragrance paraphernalia, to regard him no better than Indra's pimp and procurer, or Woman's ally for ensnaring Man. Such a position was wrong, and untenable. It was inevitable that sooner or later a reaction should set in, and, as reactions will, carry matters to the other, and equally absurd, extreme! Both Kam and *Kanya* were reinstated and that with a bang. Kam's way became people's *Dharm*. Desire was no longer one of the aims, but all our aim. It became the final goal, became synonymous with *nirvan*, liberation. In course of time, the Shiv-and-Parvati myth was misinterpreted into sanction for much that was, to say the least, licentious. Kam, as Desire, was in for a bad time again, and wisely took the form of *Prem*. As Praduman, son of Krishn, he was to enjoy, thanks to his father's ways and values, a still higher status, and was as happy as Love, as he had been as Desire. The subtle enemy! As for the *Kanya*, she now represented the Goddess, nay, was the Goddess, and was worshipped as such.

8

The Kanya as Devi

> *"As play She creates the universe, hence She is Kumari. Or She destroys (marayate) the ground (ku) of the great illusion, hence She is Kumari. Kumari is the enjoyer and not to be enjoyed, as She is one with the Yogi, the enjoyer."*
>
> *—Bhaskararaya*

THAT YOUNG GIRLS are sacred is an idea which is met with in all races and religions. This is because they hold the promise of fertility and maternity, and are, therefore, a symbol of life and part of living Nature. As elsewhere, in Hindu mythology also, they are held to be possessing miraculous powers. For instance, the touch of a virgin's foot will make the flowers of the *ashok* tree blossom. Apropos this J. J. Meyer notes in his book, *Sexual Life in Ancient India* :

> "Even the unbending tree is filled with delight and life by woman's splendour : 'Even the trees bloom through the secret of beauty of form.' According to the poetical convention of the Indians the *kurabaka*, indeed, covers itself with blossoms, when a lovely woman clasps it ; the *tilaka*, when she looks on it ; the *ashoka*, when it is touched by her foot ; the mango, when her hand touches it ; the *priyala*, when it hears her song ; the *keshava* or the *bakula*, when sprinkled with intoxicant from her mouth."

Nor is this all. In addition to having the 'flower-touch', there are many other powers which are attributed to the *kanya.*

How this idea developed into a full-fledged cult during the Middle Ages is an amazing story and a great tribute to the astounding inventiveness of the human mind. The fact is that whenever man has, for one reason or another, taken to a course of life which is against the basic instincts that govern our being, there is always a very powerful reaction; and in course of time spacious arguments are found out to justify a seemingly outrageous travesty of the earlier theories and findings. At times, recourse is taken to such measures because the protagonists of a particular faith are interested in contending against another faith. They freely offer bait and concessions that will help win over the followers of another powerful, rival creed to their own way. Medieval India presents a fascinating example of such forces at work. First, Jainism and Buddhism, both on one side, and Hinduism, on the other, fought it out on this holy battle-field. When the forces of Hinduism had won, *Shaivism* and *Vaishnavism* started wrangling against each other. In order to defeat the adversary all kinds of weapons were used. Naturally, one most successful method could be this : Offer to the votaries new philosophies which gave them liberty, nay licence, to indulge in sensual pleasures almost to any extent.

The *Tantric* approach of making worship directly related to the use of five *makars* and so allowing the votaries to partake of flesh and wine, to enjoy the pleasure of the senses in the name of religion, is a glaring example of such a manoeuvre. Likewise, the cult of the Goddess and the worship of the *kanya* representing the Goddess, putting the *kumaris*, the virgins, on a pedestal as high as that of the Goddess, is another. The whole concept of *Shakti* worship is a most impressive performance of the human mind engaged in such advocacy. Of course, this development was a logical culmination of a process which had gone on for several centuries. As soon as man found that, religious intentions apart—which had kept woman subservient to him—in actual fact she mattered to him so much, he tried to equate her status with his own. Thus in the age of *Ramayan*, already it was necessary for the wife to sit with the husband at the time of the *Yagya* ceremony; otherwise the *Yagya* would be deemed as ill-performed. Logically, we find this culminating in the case of Parvati and Shiv. In a *Tantra* like the *Mahanirvan Tantra* Shiv clearly indicates the equal status of Parvati. She is like himself in every way and to her he accords high honour and great praise. So far so good ; but now begins a further development which converts the goddess into the Highest, and makes other gods including the highest gods, the old trinity, of Brahma, Shiv and Vishnu, subservient to her. This is explained through a legend in which the gods, even these high gods, fail to overpower Mahishasur, the buffalo-demon, so that it became necessary to create a new divinity that could crush this evil personification of strength and wickedness. All the gods lent part of their strength to this new concept and so there came into existence, Devi, the Goddess, who combined in her the attributes and powers of all the other deities and was, therefore, greater than each and all of them. This goddess was linked with innumerable other forms, even as, in respect of his incarnations, Vishnu is linked with many different concepts. All these forms of the goddess were amalgamated in a single story, and through mental transference, the Goddess was thought of as Parvati, and, therefore, as the Virgin.

The opposite of this theory is equally valid. An ugly duckling will grow into a beautiful princess, the moment she is looked upon by the eye of love. *Kanya-Kubja* is healed and straightened out to become a beautiful woman when she is touched by Krishn, when the magic of love works on her. We have, therefore, two separate parts of this tale. There is the magic of youth and virginity which converts a dead tree into a living one ; makes flowers and fruits grow out of that, gives life to them and adds fragrance, so that where a beautiful woman walks, Spring walks with her and flowers grow under her feet. In addition, there is the charm of love, of desire which confers youth and beauty even on those who did not have them. This has nothing to do with the idea that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. It is an actual physical transformation.

If youth is a blessing which turns every girl into a goddess, mortals cannot comprehend the beauty and attractions of a goddess at the finest flower of life. Purity of heart and soul the goddess had, but why not beauty and splendour of the body, too ? To divorce physical beauty and attraction and the vigour of youth from the beauty of the soul, from the principle of *Dharm*, was wrong. This worship was intended to establish that. Again, since the virgin of today would become the mother of tomorrow, Mother Nature continues to send a relay of virgins. In worshipping the virgin, one, therefore, worshipped Nature, worshipped the principle of creation, the principle of latent energy, energy which was willing to expend itself in fulfilling the purposes of the universe.

To revert, when the Goddess took birth as woman, even as time and again, divinity had taken birth as man, it was to fulfil the same purpose for which Vishnu's incarnations had become necessary. It was to establish *Dharm*, to arrest the decline of *Dharm*, as Krishn put it, that she too had allowed herself to be reincarnated. And as with Krishn, so with Parvati, this re-assertion of *Dharm* took place at several levels and was a kind of multipurpose project. From the point of view of the gods, she helped, through her union with Shiv, to provide them with a sorely wanted general for their armies agaist Tarak, and, for that matter, for all time. Apparently, the gods were not interested in anything beyond that. Although Kam, poor fellow, suffered a sort of martyrdom in his attempt to prove of use and service to the gods, he too had no long-range vision of the tremendous implications of this love between a god and a goddess. Yet looking at the myth, we find that there was a much larger purpose behind this Cosmic drama, this Cosmic romance of Shiv and Parvati. In a real sense, *Dharm* had declined in so far as that woman, who had been creatad to be equal of man, to serve as the other wheel of the chariot of life, and who was, in the nature of things, as necessary as man, had come to be regarded as an inferior being, and an ally of Kam. Kam himself had become a god of low activity; and it was generally accepted that there was something basically evil about the female. The question which Anand put to the Buddha as to how and why should womanly nature be a hindrance to the attainment of perfection, was a valid question. Manu had said that woman had been created to be mother, just as man had been created to be father; and so no *yagya* would be complete without both as participants. Yet, during the ages a situation had developed wherein she was regarded not as pure, but impure inherently, was not respected but looked down upon. Her very reflection was considered as a snare for fools. She became the symbol of illusion and deceit, became a synonym for appearance as against reality. The least that man could do was to be aware of her evil power and to strive to get away from her.

It was to counter-act all this and other such stuff, which we have already spoken of in an earlier chapter, that Parvati had incarnated herself as woman. It had been believed so far that the only function of young virgins was to serve as Kam's weapons, as snare and noose for men, so that men may stay caught in the web of existence. Yet, Uma, resplendent with youth and beauty, had scorned physical charms. Her pure refulgence, her utterly clean devotion to her would-be-Lord-and-husband, Shiv, had to have a different import. When she found that she had been misunderstood and regarded as Desire's victim, she set out to show a few, hitherto unsuspected, qualities. Her great penance was greater than that of the *yogis*—proving thereby that, like the *Brahmchari*, the *Brahmcharini* too has great powers, has great purity, has a great capacity for *tapasya* and self-sacrifice, and has all the other virtues of the *yogi*. She beat even the best of *yogis*, and her penance made Shiv accept her as his wife.

Mark that this was no Shakuntala who would consent to *Gandharv* marriage, nor a Rukmini willing to marry a Krishn, without, nay, against, the wishes of her people. Nor was it, again, a Radha, another man's wife, desiring a secret meeting with the god-lover. This was Parvati, the goddess, who, though young, was mature in the extreme in respect of rectitude. There was no question of doing anything which could be misconstrued not only by her father or by her beloved, but by any one in the whole universe. Nor would the divine bridegroom desire anything less. Indeed, the high-mindedness of Parvati must have added to her sterling qualities and thus raised her in the eyes of Shiv.

This is an important point, and whatever the later developments, whatever the laxity that was subsequently allowed in the name of *Shakti Puja*, we do find an insistence on marriage before union. In earlier *Shakt* philosophy and ritual, nowhere do we come across any licentious permission for the *sadhak* to have sexual union with a woman who is not *swiya*, one's own, permanently, or for the duration, but duly consecrated.

In later practices, there is far more laxity and in the name of *Shaivism* and *Shakti Puja*, much was sanctified which ought not to have been sanctified. Phrases like 'willing woman', which we come across in description of certain *mudras*, were later twisted to mean not a willing *wife* but any woman who was willing to cooperate, to become a partner in the *sadhna*, or in a particular *mudra*.

That is why if virgins would be the symbol and representation of the goddess, they would have to be extra careful. Each of them had to be like the goddess, a virgin, virgin truly—chaste in body, in spirit and mind, wholly venerable, above reproach, steady, firm and clean. If and when there is someone who would be, for any maiden, what Shiv was for Parvati, she may, by all means, regard him as her one and only husband; but to him, she will belong only through matrimony and with due rites and ceremonial. A maiden may rise to the highest level of such love and such utter dedication, as Parvati did for Shiv. In one's thoughts and even in one's dreams, and not in this birth only but in every birth, will there be one man, and only he as one's lord and husband. To innumerable Hindu women, and to women generally, such sentiment comes easily. To misconstrue the offering of love as it obtained in the later development either in *Shakti Puja* or *Bhakti* Cult, so as to surrender oneself wholly and unconditionally to him or her whom one loves, rising above all honour and shame, above all considerations of moral or social rectitude, would be, from the point of view of Parvati, wholly inadmissible. There is something in each one of us, which cannot be surrendered because it does not belong to us. We can surrender only that which is ours, our own body, and our own mind and our own life, but not that immortal element in us, that particle of the eternal in us, which constitutes the Self, and which has to be kept intact, pure and undefiled.

Kumari-puja, the cult of all virgins being worshipful, derives its sanction and validity from this basic principle, underlying Parvati's conduct. It will be a mockery of the worship of the virgins, if the ritual and ceremony of worship are there but she who is worshipped does not reflect truly that light and glory, that chastity in body and mind and spirit, that utmost restrain of the senses and total sensitivity towards what was right and proper, which the goddess as virgin so pre-eminently displayed. It is towards that ideal that each virgin was required to strive and, to some extent, this did take place. Each human being is born pure and if, right from the start, a certain ideal is placed before the growing child, boy or girl, there is a good chance of a development along desirable lines. In the purity of her youth and as yet untasted loveliness, there resides a natural bashfulness in each virgin. The ideal that Uma, the virgin goddess, offered for young girls to follow helps intensify a natural tendency.

Later, this cult proved to be the beginning of a delusion through which young and innocent girls would be beguiled into slipping. It would lead virgins to no moral uplift, but to immoral ways, to degradation. Somewhere, all this would get linked up with the cult of the *Devdasis*, and since the flesh is weak, the spirit would sooner or later yield to what the body would desire and, desiring, justify the desire through the mind, that clever advocate of the devil, that is for ever finding out such justifications.

Uma thus proclaimed to the world that the *Kanya* had to be respected, and sought. And since the world was likely to forget the true import of this momentous event, and ignore its significance ; since the world was likely to accept her as the goddess because she was the wife of a god, it was necessary that a new cult should perpetuate her victory. Consequently, she conferred divinity on all virgins. All over Hindu India, we have the ritual and festival of *Kumari Puja*, worship of virgins. Though but one of the ways in which the goddess is worshipped, this, *Kumari Puja*, is among the highest. By implication it came to be believed that the goddess resided in every virgin and she who was a virgin was pure and divine. The sages might take refuge at the feet of a virgin and no harm would come to them. Instead of being vessels of desire, and only that, the virgins were now the vessels of divinity, containers of the spirit, and not merely so much flesh and blood which a Buddha would scoff at, as in the story of Rupananda. The loveliness of the girl of sixteen, the virgin, full with the promise of a thousand maternities, was no attraction of mere flesh. It was divine light oozing out through the pores of the body. They say that a lion will turn away from the virgin, in submission. Even in Western mythology, Diana, the goddess of Chastity, is a huntress of no mean repute, is full of such energy that neither man nor god dare cross her.

Logically, the next step was to make not merely the virgin as worshipful but to make all women worthy of reverence. This was accomplished in two ways, First as mother, since as we have noted above, women were created to be mothers. There is hardly anyone who is not instinctively filled with a sense of reverence for one's mother. This is a basic sentiment, and the two interlinked concepts, 'goddess as mother' and 'mother as goddess', became popular formulae. The second form in which the woman became worthy of worship was the youthful virgin when she could be thought of as the goddess. But this was not enough. Woman must continue to be worthy of worship. Since, in the earlier phase, she had been associated and linked with Kam and considered inferior on that account, was rated low and regarded as wicked because of that, now she had to be not only absolved of all stigma, but given a higher status. She was, therefore, made to serve as an essential in the ritual of worship. The *Tantriks*, the *Shakts* especially, converted every woman, through proper and prescribed rites, into *Shakti*, the goddess, even though she became that for the time being. In the *Panch-Makar* way of worship or the *Chakra Puja*, every woman who participated was, for the duration, regarded as incarnation of the goddess. Every man was *Shiv* and every woman *Shakti*, and so what they did was beyond reproach and above criticism. The gods can do nothing which is wrong. Nay, whatever they do is right, and there is no question of doubt on that score. Irrespective, therefore, of the values which obtained in normal course, the conduct of all participants in the *Chakra Puja* was that of righteous men and women. Stories are told of how far above considerations of 'I' and 'mine' and 'thou' and 'thine', men and women, who went in for this kind of worship, were. For the *maithun* ceremonial, the women would go first into the place fixed for this, leaving their bodices in a heap outside. The men would then pick one bodice each out of that heap, and whoever was the owner of a particular bodice, which the man had picked up, was, for the time of the ritual, during the worship, his rightful spouse, his *Shakti*. The ceremony over, thc 'god' and the 'goddess' became 'humans' again and were bound by the laws of society, as usual. Of course, that which had been done during the *Chakra Puja* had been done by divinity, and that was the end of it. Naturally all this helped to put woman on a very high pedestal, and she became a goddess.

It is obvious that it is difficult for men to accept as divine a body which is old and decrepit and devoid of beauty and vigour. However we may like to deceive ourselves, it is not easy for our blood to be entirely rid of the element of desire. The mother concept was, therefore, a great help in projecting a 'nobler' image of the female of the species. It was easier to worship the goddess as Mother. Of course, innumerable hymns to the goddess as Mother, bear testimony also to her beauty and youth. It is to the young mother, a mother who is still lovely and desirable, that homage is offered. It is easy to understand this. Mother of Ganesh or Kumar, and of us all Parvati is ; but for Shiv, she must stay desirable and adorable in a different way. And so the beauty and attractiveness of the virgin, and the affection and the respect attaching to mother-hood, both these had to be combined in a single picture. In the case of the virgin, it was the future mother who was being projected, just as in the case of the mother, it was her earlier attractiveness, as virgin, which was still being reflected.

Through being an incarnation of the goddess as virgin, woman gained in spiritual status. It is true that Shiv was able to put on his marriage the gloss of *Dharm*, stating that this marriage was taking place in accordance with the desire of the gods, so that the worthy issue should be able to put an end to Tarak. But surely it could not be just that. The victory of Parvati was the victory of the pure heart and the pure body of a virgin, of her total purity, the same purity which has continued, through the ages, to exercise the powerful pull that helps her receive homage from man, and keeps the world's balance. For once, this equilibrium had been rudely shaken. The Buddha, and the *yogis* generally, had made men regard woman only as '*apsara*', as an instrument at the disposal of Indra, and a weapon in the service of Kam, and no more. What is worse, woman began to be thought as impure, and subject to greater weakness, physical and mental, than the male. Driven almost to slavery by the glance of the virgin, whose single tress was more powerful than strong chains of iron and steel, man after man felt humbled. Obviously, he would reassert himself if and when he could. When his wife's—or woman's—virginity and youth had become a forgotten past, when the fire in his blood had subsided and all passion spent out, each man tried to show that, through the dawning of wisdom, he had now an aversion to the sex-act. Giving a wrong twist to what was a 'natural' change, he invented philosophies which were unjust to the female of the species. For a while, woman was content to stay in the background, leaving her male counterpart to run the universe and to steal the limelight. Things, however, went too far and it became necessary to restore the balance. And so the Goddess herself appeared as a virgin, and, in more ways than one, proved her purity and power, such as compelled even the *Mahayogi*, Shiv, to bow to her, to desire her and to seek her as his wife.

In addition, she showed that where beauty and attraction lay, there *Dharm* and goodness could also be ; that it was wrong to make any *a priori* conclusion, to the effect that that which was beautiful was immoral ; that all that was young, was wicked ; that all that was full of energy and vigour, was necessarily an evil force. On the contrary, woman, the young virgin, especially, was as much a force for good, and as much a part of the total principle of *Dharm*, on which the universe was founded, as the pure-souled and the pure-bodied *yogi*. Indeed, what the *yogi* was trying to gain, through *Brahmcharya* and *Yog*, was a body which was beautiful and forever young, and full of vitality and radiant with a divine light—and this is what each virgin is blessed with, so that she is naturally divine, is a *yogini* by virtue of just being a virgin, and has tremendous power and potentiality even of a spiritual kind, just because of her virginity. The virgin can command kings. A glance of hers can make the mightiest tremble because chastity, especially, if it is chastity of the will as well as of the body, is the highest virtue. In the beginning, there was the unmanifested matter and undifferentiated *Purush*. Then, in his wisdom, the Creator created countless forms and sexual differentiation ; and in creating man and woman he was enunciating the whole principle and not a half-truth. One without the other is meaningless. To accept one and to reject the other, would be a repudiation of God, for each acts according to his or her nature. The nature of the virgin is to attract, to attract so powerfully, that men will bind themselves willingly and voluntarily to conjugality, and thus help in the task of creation and procreation. To deny this truth, to reject woman, or to hold her as inferior and lower was obviously an incorrect approach. By making every virgin a goddess, a gross error was being rectified.

A new philosophy of *Bhog*—which is not indulgence merely, but has a very much wider meaning, embracing the total experience of life in its fullest range, covering both enjoyment and suffering—as *Yog* was now developed. Woman, or rather the virgin, who represented the principle of creation, 'returned' to the world of man, from which the *yogi* had banished her. And she returned not merely as somebody just 'acceptable' but as one who was worthy of worship, and would form the basis of the new philosophy. Earlier, to be with woman, to desire woman, to live with woman, to have intercourse with woman, was regarded as sinful, was considered as a weakness on the part of man, meant succumbing to temptation. Now all this was an act of worship. What was once low living, was now a virtuous way, was a way based upon and rooted in *Dharm*. Women were now *devis*, were worshipful. In fact, all 'females' became worshipful, so that *female animals* were *not* to be slaughtered. The *Mahanirvan Tantra* says specifically: "Only male animals should be killed in sacrifice. It is the command of Shambhu that female animals should not be slain."

The term *kanya* has two important connotations. When born, the female child is not a *kanya*, nor is the word *stri* the right expression. In the various stages of a woman's life, *kanya* marks that phase when a girl has attained puberty, but is still *kumari*, virgin, is still chaste, and no male has known her. It is at this stage that she is utterly desirable and adorable. It is said that any one who looks upon a chaste maiden, ceases to be old. Nay, even the dead would come back to life if they could gain a sight of her. This notion later developed into a new *Yogic* philosophy. As we saw, the *yogi's* aim was to achieve immortality, and eternal youth and joy everlasting; and all this could be achieved by the sight merely of the woman beautiful, much more so by that of the virgin beautiful. At this stage her body acquires form and fullness. Her limbs assume the shape of all lovely things, and the girl becomes the very Goddess of Beauty. She attains puberty;

the sex-glands mature, and she is ready for the divine act of creation. The promise of fruition, which her body now flashes through every pore, is a promise that can be relied upon. This is something which was not possible a little earlier, before puberty, before nature had given a signal for it. And it is something which will not be possible after a few years, when she will cease to possess her potential maternity and her beauty. Now, and for some years hereafter, she will be at her best, in every sense of the adjective. In the course of the education of Rupananda, through the phantom woman, there is a definite stage of decline—from sixteen, as she was created—when she is a woman of twenty. As in all other cases, so in the growth of—the development of the female also, to reach the point of perfection is to begin declining. The moment, zenith and culmination are attained, the downfall starts, as if that were hidden in that moment itself, and decay sets in. This the seeing eye can determine, though for others, with grosser vision, the illusion of perfection may persist a little longer. In the act of ripening lies concealed its opposite, the act of rotting, so that one has to learn to grasp the golden moment when it occurs.

It is at this stage of perfection, then, that the virgin is goddess truly. This is a significant development, obviously. Creation cannot take place without the fullest cooperation of the female of the species, a cooperation that is best received at a particular stage, where she is full of the creative capacity and where she is most desirable. In her allurement, Nature has a purpose—a Cosmic purpose, and woe to him who dare think of it as wicked. Henceforth, to harbour an evil thought against the *kanya*, to regard her as anything less than divine, was to commit a sin. It was this turn of thought which gave birth to an entirely new philosophy. In this cult *Bhog* was made the basis of *Yog*. This new cult, where the *kanya* was priestess, served as a startlingly novel way to God and realisation of Self.

9

From Nirvan to Mahanirvan

> "*Where there is worldly enjoyment there is no Liberation; where there is Liberation, there is no worldly enjoyment. But in the case of excellent devotees of Shrisundari both Liberation and Enjoyment are in the hollow of their hands.*"
>
> *Rudra-Yamal*

BY A QUEER TRICK in reasoning, the natural phenomenon that during and after the period of '*Brahmacharya*', one had the vitality and capacity for performing the sex-act, gave rise to the idea that to remain celebate would help one to grow and remain strong, even to go on growing strong, until one became invulnerable, terribly potent, '*Vajra-vastu*. It was believed that through such self-control and sex-control—self-control often, or, at least, above all, and, in practice, meant that—it was possible to challenge the might of Indra, and to compel the god of gods to appear and grant a boon to the *yogi*. Why we say that in practice it all came to sex-control, is because invariably the *yogi's* fall was tried and—if the attempt was successful—brought about through temptation connected with the male's desire for the female. The classic model of all such subterfuge was *Mohini's* cheating of the demons at the time of the *Amrit-manthan*. Thus Rambha and Tilottma were sent to bewilder and corrupt the demon-brothers, Shumbh and Nishumbh, and so hinder, nay, put a stop to, their penance. Or a Menaka would be despatched to tempt a sage like Vishvamitr and thereby save Indra's throne from being lost by the god and acquired by the *yogi*. Indeed, the word for penance is *tapasya*, root, *tapas*—Persian, *tapash*—which means heat, for much, nay, tremendous 'heat' was generated and stored up through such penance. In the case of certain *yogis*, there was so much of this 'heat' that it was unnecessary for them to cover their bodies even in the winter snows of the high Himalayas. The *repas* of Tibet wear nothing beyond their cotton covering (*repa*, cotton)—even in the severest cold. As for their capacity to bear intense heat with equal ease, the explanation is that heat gets converted into energy, or that heat is the cure of heat. Anyway, there is no doubt that the idea was to generate—and conserve—heat and then convert it into energy, and to build it up into a terrific stock-pile.

Such a stock-pile the *yogi* Shiv had when he finally married Parvati. Now this marriage had been brought about in order to produce Kartikey, the god of war. Long and almost interminable was the act of copulation ; and the gods feared that even Parvati, goddess, virgin and *yogini*, would not be capable of 'bearing' the entire seed. And if she did, that would create someone far too strong to be 'permitted' to exist, for then the gods themselves would be in eternal terror of that prodigy. The long and short of it is that the seed was thrown out on the ground. Parvati was furious and *Agni* bore a portion of it. It proved too hot even for the god of fire—but all that is another story.

The point we are making is that all such stuff gave rise to the belief that, through *Bramcharya* and *tapas* the *yogi* produces and conserves energy, especially the vitality connected with sexual potency, semen. Even in the modern age, Dayanand Saraswati, went about demonstrating the immense 'physical' energy one could acquire through *Brahmcharya*.

Of course, *Brahmcharya*, continence, is only one of the five *Niyams*, Observances, in the *Yog* System—Observances which are themselves no more than a part of an elaborate ritual of preparation. Yet it came to occupy an important, almost a central, position. In the first *ashram*, in the fourfold division of a man's life made by the Aryans, one was expected to be a student, *Brahmchari*. It was after he had completed his study that a man entered the second stage, that of *grihasth*, the householder's life, the stage of the married man. Since marriage is based on sexual desire and concerns the begetting of children, the earlier stage became, by implication, something which was, supposedly, wholly unrelated to sex life. Chastity, whether for the man or the woman, before marriage, therefore, got emphasised, and, in course of time, even unduly emphasised.

Medical opinion differs as to whether staying celebate and chaste adds to one's physical and mental powers or whether indulgence makes for physical, intellectual and moral weakness. The Vedic and the Hindu view, in general, has been that through *Brahmcharya*, the state of being a *Brahmchari*, one possesses tremendous energy, and it is a compulsory Observance. It should not be forgotten, however, that unless the other Observances and various rules relating to the praxis of *Yog* are aqually strictly kept, little or, at least, no real good can be expected.

Of course, it speaks volumes for the interest men have in sex-life that of a score and more other equally important aspects of the praxis of *Yog*, this should have been singled out as the most important. Obviously, much, if not all, of man's thought and man's desire, gets focussed on this point. And since woman was, for man, Nature's normal means for the satisfaction of his sexual impulse, she became synonymous with Desire. For such philosophies and ideals, which emphasised celebacy, *Brahmcharya*, and required that one should conserve one's vital fluid and so build up stocks and reserves of energy, woman became an enemy. For those philosophies or ideals which regarded the begetting of children as an equally valid value, she became a goddess. As wife, she was the *Grihlakshmi—Lakshmi* of the home—and both for the husband and the children. But she would be an enticement—unless she be the would-be-wife—for the *Brahmchari*. For the *yogi* or *sanyasi*, who was concerned with other matters, or at least not with this, worldliness, there would be only one view and version of woman: ally of the devil; most potent weapon of Kam, and of Indra who is forever in fear of losing his heavenly kingdom. She is a honey-coated pill of poison, a rose-tinted, luminous hoax; an illusion of all that is worth desiring, worth pursuing, but essentially hollow, signifying nothing. She is gold with that unnatural magical effect which turns to dross all that it touches, is a flower that has colour and beauty but no fragrance, is a means contrived by the gods to scoff at men and reduce the best of them to the state either of beastliness or of a worm grovelling in the dust for her grace and favour. Of the thousand and one attractions upon earth, she is the greatest, is attraction incarnate, *Akarshni*, who, in this most charming and alluring form, acts as the most potent hindrance on one's path.

Let us take note once again of the hindrances and obstacles which prevent our success in *Yog*. By now, Religion and Philosophy have considerably modified their approach. We quote from *Shiv Samhita*:

"Parvati said, 'O Lord, O beloved Shankar! tell me, for the sake of those whose minds search after the supreme end, the obstacles and the hindrance to *Yog*.' Shiv said, 'Hear, O goddess! I shall tell thee all the obstacles that stand in the path of *Yog*. For the attainment of emencipation enjoyments (*Bhog*) are the greatest of all impediments.

"BHOG : Women, beds, seats, dresses, and riches are obstacles to *Yog*. Betels, dainty dishes, carriages, kingdoms, lordliness and powers; gold, silver, as well as copper, gems, aloe wood, and kine; learning the Vedas and the Shastras; dancing, singing and ornaments; harp, flute and drum; riding on elephants and horses; wives and children, worldly enjoyments; all these are so many impediments. These are the obstacles which arise from *Bhog*. Hear now the impediments which arise from ritualistic religion.

"DHARM : The following are the obstacles which *Dharm* interposes : ablution, worship of deities, observing the sacred days of the moon, fire, sacrifice, hankering after *moksh*, vows and penances, fasts, religious observances, silence, the ascetic practices, contemplation and the object of contemplation, Mantras and alms-giving, worldwide fame excavating and endowing of tanks, wells, ponds, convents and groves; sacrifices, vows of starvation, Chandrayana, and pilgrimages.

"JNANA : Now I shall describe, O Parvati, the obstacles which arise from knowledge. Sitting in the *Gomukh* posture and practising *Dhauti*. Knowledge of the distribution of the *nadis*, learning of *pratyahara*, trying to awaken the *Kundlini* force, by moving quickly the belly, entering into the path of the *Indriyas*, and knowledge of the action of the *nadis*; these are the obstacles."

Note again that woman tops the list, under the heading *Bhog*. So far, there is still the old and conventional view of the matter, and *Bhog* is antithetic to *Yog*, and not a part of it. Yet now not only *Bhog* but *Dharm* and *Gyan* can be hindrances. Surely some new means had to be found which was more reliable than these. These are '*Mantras* of the *Tantras*'. Of the efficacy of one of these *mantras*, we have the following, in the *Shiv Samhita*:

"Now shall I tell you the best of practices, the Japa of Mantra : from this one gains happiness in this as well in the world beyond this. By knowing this highest of the Mantras, the Yogi certainly attains *siddhi* : this gives all power and pleasure to the one-pointed Yogi. In the four-petalled Muladhara lotus is the bija of speech, brilliant as lightning. In the heart is the bija of love. In the space between the two eyebrows is the bija of Shakti brilliant as tens of millions of moons. These three seeds should be kept secret—they give enjoyment and emancipation. Let the Yogi repeat these three Mantras and try to attain siddhi...The Yogi, who having controlled his senses, repeats this Mantra one hundred thousand times, gains the power of attracting others...By repeating this fifteen lacs of times, the Siddhas, the Vidyadharas, the Gandharvas, the Apsaras come under the control of the Yogi...By repeating this thirty lacs of times, he becomes equal to Brahma and Vishnu. He becomes a Rudra, by sixty lac repetitions, by eighty lac repetitions, he becomes all-enjoyer, by repeating one ten of millions of times, the great Yogi is absorbed in the Param Brahman. Such a practitioner is hardly to be found throughout the three worlds."

Soon there will be a twist—in the sense that we must placate and please the goddess, Tripursundri, through whose favour alone may the *sadhak* attain bliss. Tripursundri is, as is well known, one of the names of the goddess Parvati. Of her Shankaracharya speaks, in his hymns to the goddess, with hyperbolic praise.

That much for woman. But the most revealing aspect of the development and the most important clue to the solution of the old dilemma was in the approach that poison is the cure of poison, that the like alone can destroy the like, that to take a thorn out of our flesh, we should use a thorn. Thus woman may be cured and controlled by woman, as wine by wine. This is a common enough phenomenon so that most men will keep some woman—wife, sister, daughter—to act as the buffer between him and such women as would seduce him. All our heroes and leaders are accompanied by a female companion, for the same purpose. Of course, the most normal help is that of any wife, anywhere. This one woman, as wife, acts as the wall between her husband and all the rest of the females of the species, or ought to.

Though *Raj Yog* is itself a method, a means, *Hath Yog* was later on developed as a ladder to *Raj Yog*. In the *Hath Yog* there arose a new concept of the body. In *Vajryan*, the body played a still more significant role and, through the various *asans* and *mudras*, total control of mind and body was achieved. Through the awakening of the *Kundlini*, and directing of the *pran* in the right way and through right channels (*nadis*), it was found that one was impervious to all weakness of body or mind or heart, was beyond decay and death, was eternally young, like Kamdev, and was splendid, heroic and happy, capable of pleasure (*Rati*) etc. Women would be under his control even as men would be. As a beautiful woman attracts men, as a flower attracts the honey-bees, and the flame attracts the moths, so will a man, resplendent man, virile and handsome, full of fragrance and flavour of youth about him—in short, the *yogi*—attract all.

A word about the *Panch Makars*—the five m's—which signify a seeming reversal of the earlier, *Yogic sadhna*. Whereas, in the context of the practice of *Yog*, things like meat and wine were once unthinkable, the new philosophies counted in even *maithun*, sexual union, as one of the essentials of *Puja*. *Mans*—meat; *matsya*—fish; *mudra*—which can mean corn or gold or gesture, dance or woman, etc.; *madya*—wine; and *maithun*—sexual union—the use of all these as part of a spiritual ritual appears to be rather odd. That is why, some critics often explain them by reference to their symbolic and attributive value, and caution us against accepting them in their literal meaning. In their "*Tantras, Their philosophy and occult secrets*", Bose and Halder comment as follows :

"It will not be proper to take the Pancha Makaras, the five M's... Madya, Mansa, Matsya, Mudra and Maithuna in their literal senses. The Tantras have indulged in sandhya language with double meaning on many occasions. Those were catch-phrases to the common people in the old days when the society was still in the making. The later Tantrics have termed them as symbolic of yogic processes. The terms are reflections of the amorous raptures of the mystic Sadhakas whose joy resembles that of a lover meeting her beloved after long waiting.

The simple meanings of these terms follow :

"Madya is the nectarine stream issuing from cavity of the brain where the soul resides.

Matsya means the suppression of vital airs.

Mansa is the vow of silence.

Mudra means inter-weaving of fingers during religious worship. It is a physical process that is calculated to enhance concentration of the worshipper.

Maithuna is meditation on the acts of creation and destruction."

On the other hand, the *Mahanirvan Tantra* refers to the use of wine as wine, meat as meat, fish as fish, food as food and woman as woman.

Though wine and meat are objectionable enough, *maithun*, copulation, is the extreme, obviously. Yet in religious thought of this kind, *maithun* represents the act of creation. Now those, who would meditate upon the Supreme, will naturally do that through meditating upon cosmic activities. These consist of creation and destruction. When the *Panch Makar* makes *maithun* as one of the five essentials of worship, the idea, according to one interpretation, is to require the devotees not to indulge in sexual activity, but to meditate upon the act of creation which is symbolised by the *mithun* figures. Just as we take to the worship of the Absolute in some manifestation, use the *moorti*, the image, for the sake of easier concentration, so the *mithun* sculpture merely helps us to focus our attention on the concept of creation. The innumerable representations of the *mithun* would be intended, in the light of this explanation, merely to serve as so many other images do. These can be, as in the earlier stages of this development, in the form of *Shivling*, the organ of procreation which also serves as the symbol of creation. The same approach obtains at a place like Kamakhya, where the Goddess is worshipped in the form of the *yoni*. On the walls of a temple we see innumerable images of Shiv or Parvati, Brahma or Saraswati, Lakshmi or Agni, Ganesh, Ram or Krishn, or of other deities, but it does not occur to us to object to them. All these images help the devotee in his effort at concentration. Now, these deities may be represented in their several manifestations which symbolise their various attributes. The *mithun* sculpture should be regarded in that light, no more. The viciousness that we associate with it, comes, as usual, from our own mind, and does not inhere in what we behold.

This is one explanation. But, and as we noted, the new approach is connected also with the two main cosmic activities, namely creation and destruction. Before the undifferentiated matter was made manifest in forms, before the sexes were created, it is obvious that there was no duality. Whatever is created and whatever is desired, is today put in the form of opposites: darkness and light; wisdom and folly; *sattva* and *tamas*; man and woman; life and death; creation and destruction. Yet all this was once one. Therefore, if we would achieve complete unity, and guard against being caught in the whirlpool of existence, the real road would be backwards, to the stage of undifferentiation of the matter, to sexlessness. Apropos these issues, the Sun stands, in Hindu philosophy, for destruction and the Moon for—at least, partly—creation. One can guess why it should be so. The terrible heat of India would be regarded as damaging and destructive, whereas the cool and refreshing rays of the Moon would be associated with vivifying. Again, Hindu philosophy chose to develop the idea of the body as a kind of microcosm, a little universe, so that all that was without was also to be found within the body. Corresponding to the Sun and the Moon etc., outside the body, similar points were created whithin also. At the basic *chakr* called *Mooladhar*, the Sun's terrible heat dries up immediately the nectar that drips from the point in the head, called *Sahasrar*, the thousand-petalled lotus. At the bottom of a long and hollow canal, called the *Sushumna*, which is the central canal linking the brain to the *Mooladhar*, rests our latent power, the *Kundlini*. The idea is to rouse this *Kundlini* and to make it move upwards, through half a dozen psychic centres, on to the *Sahasrar*. Normally, the bottom end of the *Sushumna* is closed—rather, blocked, by this very 'serpent power' that coils itself there—and our vital breath, the *pran*, moves up and down not through this canal but through two other *nadis* named, *Ida* and *Pingla*, standing respectively for the Moon and the Sun. The *yogi* strives to open up, through *tapas* and *Yogic sadhana*, the bottom end of the central canal and to suspend the functioning of the *Ida* and the *Pingla*. The Moon and the Sun are thus combined through the functioning of the *Sushumna*.

In some *Yogic* systems, this 'Moon and Sun' concept is carried further. The woman is regarded as the Sun. The Moon corresponds to man or, rather, the *Sadashiv*, who is the fountain of the nectar of immortality, as the Moon is. Ordinarily, the drops of *Amrit*—the white *bindu*—keep falling from the top and are immediately dried up by the heat of the Sun, the woman at the bottom. The *yogi* tries to stop this, in two ways. One is through closing the door through which the *Amrit* falls and, at times, through taking to such *Hath Yog* exercises as *Kacheri*, in which the tongue is twisted back on to the tenth door where it laps up the nectar and so the *sadhak* gains immortality. Or, the *kundlini* is made to move up and to unite with the *Sadashiv*, which union results in everlasting bliss. So long as the 'moon' and the 'sun' are in conflict, man and woman are in conflict, heat and coolth are in conflict, there would be decay and death. Only when these are combind and through their combination made to revert to their first state of Oneness, of a lack of this dualism, will conditions be created for eternity and wholeness. In the *mithun* sculpture that we see, specially the Sexo-*Yogic* poses, the combination of man and woman symbolises this achievement. In the foursome combinations, the central figure atop the man and combining with him in one verticle axis, is the *Sushumna*, the central *nadi*, or the rising *Shakti*. The two females, one on either side, represent the *Ida* and the *Pingla*, both brought to rest with their activity ceasing wholly. The Sexo-*Yogic* postures are thus symbolic of the power of retention through *Vajroli*, and are indications of the act of reaching out to the nectar in the *Sahasrar*, the thousand-petalled lotus ; or, again, they are symbolic of the act of creation on which the *sadhak* meditates.

The *Panch Makar* way of worship is a matter with vast ramifications, and in another work I have dealt with it at great length. Here it is enough to point out that by banishing food, drink, the sexual embrace, and all pleasures of the senses, generally, from man's world, seemingly all light and delight had been banished. What use was the 'dry' world of the *yogi* which was devoid of these ? Now by allowing these to return, to return gracefully—blessed with divine grace, literally—the full colour and flavour of life were to be at the disposal of man. The enlightenment and peace and power, which *Yog* conferred, were being combind with the joys and pleasures which *Bhog* was traditionally associated with. It was this world and heaven too, so that while, earlier, *Yogic sadhna* offered and brought to one only *Nirvan*—Liberation, those who were votaries and *sadhaks* of the new cult would obtain a richer prize : *Mahanirvan*—the Great Liberation.

10

Yog Asans and Kam Asans

> *"Even one who lives a way-ward life, without observing any rules of Yog, but performs Vajroli, deserves success and is a Yogi. Two things are necessary for this, and these are difficult to get for the ordinary people—*(1) *milk ; and* (2) *a woman behaving, as desired."*
>
> —*Hath Yog Pradipika*

AN IMPORTANT point made in the myth of Uma Himavati and Shiv is that, far from being passive in her approach, when her mind and heart are set on a particular individual, the female could not only express her desire and longing, but might also go all out and openly for possessing the male. This matter has been discussed in the *Kam-Shastras* also and there are verses that would exonerate—if that is needed, for a goddess can do no wrong—Uma of any lack of modesty on this account. This fundamentally changed the concept that had so far prevailed in respect of the relationship of the male and the female. Even today authorities continue to assert that, in the field of sex activity, the male is the active, and the female the passive, agent. This may or may not be true ; but metaphysically the rules were reversed at this stage of the mythological development, and Woman became the active agent. The philosophic concepts concerning this change, were combined with certain other developments regarding the

Goddess, who became the personification of *Prakriti* and, as such, the source of all power, of energy. She became the activating agent as a whole, and naturally in the realm of sex, also. All false modesty and prudery were meaningless. Indeed, she was required to be the *active* partner in the sex-play. She roused the dormant desire in the male, roused his latent energy, and then procreated and the universe came into being. The eternal sport of Shiv and Shakti, the God and Goddess, which is represented in the *Yantras* and in the *Tantric* 'way', holds the secret of the unfolding of the world. It is the desire of the Goddess which causes this manifestation, the UNIVERSE, of which we form an extremely minute part. Then when she ceases in her activity and in her desire, the world folds up. She withdraws it into herself and we have *pralaya*, extinction of the universe. From this state she again makes Life emerge—through engaging herself in love-play with her eternal partner, who is a part of herself and of whom she is a part, both being merely two aspects of the same essence.

If we understand these things as the founders of this philosophic system wanted us to understand them, then the intent and meaning of what we see sculpted on the walls of the temples become clear. Woman is now presented in her role as the symbol of energy, as Activity, that begets the world. Awakening the dormant male, She, the Creatrix, makes the passive element take part in the creation of the universe. The male is for ever falling back into the state of sleep where his energy would lie unused ; and it is her business—whether as Shakti of each god, or as woman, in the world of man, or female of the species in all kingdoms, divine, human, animal or vegetal, to arouse the male and help in the act of creation. The *yogi* does the same although he goes into *samadhi*, the state of repose and seeming inactivity, with enlightenment forming an essential part thereof, so that his equilibrium is the equilibrium of perfect control of terrific forces. He is like the master-charioteer who can curb this vehicle with two horses yoked to it, each of which powerful beasts would run into an opposite direction. The task of the *yogi* is not merely to master these animals, to govern the force of the horses, but also to achieve movement and progress along a desirable course, through bending these animals to his will and, turning their faces from the opposite directions they choose, to make them move, like a team, in the same direction, a direction which is different from either of the tracks these horses were bent upon traversing. As the symbol of this state, Shiv had to be made to give up his penance, so that he might play his rightful role in the work of the world. The ,*yogi* had to be taught that his *Yogic* attainment, too, has to be further harnessed, for Cosmic purposes, for helping in the great design, which is our universe; and that his aversion to life, his opposition to love, to woman, must be got over. Nay, more than that; this had to be done in no negative spirit but through a positive approach. Aversion must be changed into intense passion. Towards the end of the story, we find thus, that not only does his conversion take place, but, also that Shiv's desire is so powerful that it was difficult for him to wait even for the three days after which marriage was to take place.

Yet another approach to the matter is this. It is often claimed by authorities on sex that men reach satisfaction of their desire far more rapidly than women. In fact, the frustration that women feel in respect of their sexual satisfaction is alarming in its proportions. For untold centuries, countless women have known nothing but unhappiness in their sexual relationship because they are deprived of their satisfaction. The writers on sex and on the art of love, as well as the doctors of sex, have laid a great emphasis on this point. Though women are not always suffering from frigidity, yet time and again they find that while their mates have had their orgasm and emission quickly, they are still far behind. The male takes his pleasure often without understanding the problem. His passion mounts quickly and is quickly satisfied. In the case of the woman her 'orgasm' is slow to come. The nature of her satisfaction is altogether different. Indeed, authorities have differed and continue to differ in respect of this vital matter.

To revert; whether it is continuous emission of her 'semen' or whether she has the emission-orgasm as the man has, the fact remains that in either case it helps the woman to enjoy herself, to get greater satisfaction in the sex-act, if the passion of the male partner is not of short duration or of weak intensity. For her complete satisfaction she requires a partner who is capable of engaging in the sex-act without coming off for a long time. Withal she needs live passion. This the *yogi*, who has controlled his desire, has *par excellence*. The *yogi* is a giver, or ought to be one. Further, he is a conquerer of the three gross faults namely *avidya*—ignorance, *kam*—desire, including sexual desire, and *karm*—action, whether good or bad. He is fully controlled and yet fairly vibrant with his desire; for he can put his will into whatever he is doing. Therefore the *yogi* can offer to a woman the best in the matter of sexual activity. Of course, there is a great difference between what he is doing and what a professional prostitute does. Although both seem to be engaged in the same act and aparently in the same way, in one case there is no motive, and the act is selfless. But in the other case all this is being done for sordid gain and, therefore, has all the repercussions which the law of *Karm* brings about. Once the theory of giving without self-interest is accepted, the rest is techniques. Even the common man is taught, in manuals of love, to master these techniques. The sixty-four arts, known as the sixty-four ways of sexual gratification, are nothing new for the Hindu and are found in the Indian literature on Love and, for that matter, even in sacred literature, for Religion was not divorced from life. In the Rigved we find the description of the sexual act given in ten stages; even that is a part of a larger whole. A number of unnatural poses and activities are mentioned as part of the ten steps. In the later manuals, this becomes an eight portioned process, with each of these portions having eight sub-divisions approximately—some may have more and others less—yielding thus the number sixty-four. This is different from the eighty-four *asans* which are mentioned in the manuals on the Art of Love, which correspond at time to the eighty-four *Yogic asans*. These eight limbs of the act of love, beginning with the embrace and passing through stages like kissing and biting and scratching and fellatio etc., culminate in the act of cohabitation proper. They are psychologically well-worked-out to serve the same purpose, of *yogi*-like control of the male over himself. They are intended to rouse the female and bring her up to the necessary pitch of passion, so that she may have her satisfaction along with the satisfaction of the male. One can cite chapter and verse on this point; and modern sex studies are full of loud complaints made by women of the world regarding their frustration and misery on this score. If nothing else, the male partner of the modern world could, through a study of these Sexo-*Yogic* postures, learn to offer better satisfaction to woman, and so make for a better family life and happier marriage and chaster wifehood and motherhood than obtain today.

The fact that *kanya*, the virgin, is recommended for *sadhna*, is not because at this stage, the chalice of the body of the female is filled with the wine of youth, or desire is at its maximum. Indeed, it is the view of many authorities that desire is *not* at its maximum then. Full maturity of sexual powers comes much later; and verily desire fulfilled breeds more desire, and marvellously regenerates and recreates—at least for some years, when the cells of the body are still capable of re-production. Nor is any 'deflowering' of the virgin being attempted. No, the *yogi* 'uses' the *kanya* because hers is a state of purity, of untouchedness, and represents the *satvik* element. He wishes to enrich the content of the *satvik* in his own personality, through union with the *satvik* element in the virgin, the goddess. The gods have more of the *satvik* in them than human beings and, acting like a parasite, the *yogi* would take what he can, from the innocence that all children possess and the purity which every *kanya* is blessed with.

Let us take note of another point. What a king with a harem would achieve in one way, the *yogi* achieves in another way. And whereas the former might feel, through satiety, a sense of repulsion, in the case of the latter, the *yogi*, because of desire never fulfilled, the attraction would be continuous and unending. It is this, this passionless passion, this union of *Kam* and *Yog*, which we find revealed in the sculptures of 'equilibrium'.

We have pointed out earlier that the ecstasy of the *yogi* and the ecstasy of the lover are almost similar in their nature. It was now possible to study the two paths in comparable rather than contrasting terms. Perhaps the two *sadhanas*, *Yog* and *Bhog*, are like parallel roads, which will never meet so that what we see carved in the sculptures is not union but essentially a separation of *Bhog* and *Yog*. For all the semblance of their togetherness, the *yogi*, standing on his head and the woman fitted to his pelvis, are not enjoying any at-one-ment but are shown, rather, as belonging each to a different realm. The *Yogi* is, to put it bluntly, just not there. His body, yes, but not his mind which through *Pratyahar* has been withdrawn so that the senses are no longer functioning as they normally do.

How can then there be tumescence of the *lingam* ? This is a legitimate question. The answer is that this can be achieved through control of the *pran*, breath, wind—"Not I, but the wind that blows through me !"—or life—call it what you will—which the *yogi* can direct to any limb of his body. And having done that, it is possible for the *yogi* to achieve, through *Kumbhak*, such retention of the breath as could ensure the state of erection everlastingly, if he is a perfect *yogi*, a *siddh*. This is a most intriguing situation. Though tumescence has been brought about, which should normaly lead to detumescence, in this particular case there would be no such consequence, because the functioning of the senses, the *karm* of the *indriyas*, has been suspended. This point deserves to be understood and pondered over carefully. Those who jump to conclusions of their own in the matter should stop to reflect over and realise the total situation rather than confuse the issue, and get confused, in the bargain.

A note of caution should be sounded for the hedonist and the libertine. Those who attempt imitation of the so-called erotic sculptures of places like Khajuraho and Konark in order to extract the *Yogic bhog*, sexual enjoyment in accordance with *Yogic* techniques, and to taste *Mahasukh*, the great bliss, should desist, for nothing is more erroneous and more dangerous than this. Again and yet again in the Hindu *Shastras* do we come across the advice that the *Yogic* practices should be undertaken only with the aid, and under the guidance, of a *guru*. Some authorities—on sex-in-religion—say that woman can be a good guide and *guru* in these matters. Nothing could be more puerile than to believe such a thing. In the interest of one's own sanity one should refrain from rushing in where angels fear to tread. The ground of sex is slippery enough; that of *Yog* is verily a razor's edge. To be able to walk on either without a fall, is a performance worthy of applause. When both of them are combined to pose the maximum of danger and difficulty, it is only the greatest among even the expert and the adept, who could succeed and make the destination.

A word about the *asans*, both of *Yog* and *Kam*. Although their number is at times exaggerated to vast figures the popularly accepted number of *Yog asans* is eighty-four. In a *Tantric* work on *Hath Yog* the *Gheranda Samhita*, we find the following :

"There are eighty-four hundred of thousands of Asans described by Shiva. The postures are as many in number as there are number of living creatures in this universe. Among them eighty-four are the best."

The *Kam asans*—coital postures—are also often counted as eighty-four. But, and as in the case of *Yog asans*, some authorities give a larger number. According to one calculation, it is 729. This takes into consideration different categories of men, women and the intensity of their passion, with nine variations each. In a specific chapter in his *Kam-Sutra*, Vatsyayan describes various kinds of sexual union, according to (a) Dimensions, (b) Force of Desire or Passion, and (c) Duration. He says :

"Men are divided into three classes, *viz*., the hare men, the bull-men, and the horse-men, according to the size of their *lingam*.

Woman also, according to the depth of her *yoni*, is called a deer type, a mare type or an elephant type.

There are thus three equal unions between persons of corresponding dimensions, and there are six unequal unions when the dimensions do not correspond, or nine in all...

There are also nine kinds of unions according to the force of passion or carnal desire...

Further, in regard to duration also, there are nine kinds of sexual intercourse, in the same way as there are nine kinds according to the dimensions and nine corresponding to the force of passion...

There being thus nine kinds of union with regard to dimensions, force of passion, and time, respectively, by making combinations of them, innumerable kinds of union would be produced."

In a subsequent chapter, Vatsyayan dilates on oral congress, and its variations. Modern authorities on sex, like Havelock Ellis, confirm that in the heat of passion, a man or a woman may and will assume strange postures so that their name is legion. Vatsyayan offers some verses :

"About these things there cannot be either enumerations or any definite rule. Congress having once commenced, passion alone goads the parties to various acts.

"Such passionate action and amorous gesticulations or movements, which arise on the spur of the moment and during sexual intercourse, cannot be defined, and are as irregular as dreams.

"A horse having once attained the fifth degree of motion goes on with blind speed, regardless of pits, ditches, and posts in his way. In the same manner a loving pair becoming blind with passion in the heart of congress, goes on with great impetuosity paying not the least regard to excess."

Some of the postures for congress have names which are similar to those which the *Yog asans* have. Thus, there is the *Padmasan*. Again, a very important *asan—mudra—bandh*, both in the field of *Yog* as well as *Kam*, is the *Sheershasan* or *Vipreetkarni*—literally, doing or making it upside down. This has strange bearings, because it is connected directly with sex. we have seen earlier that there is constant dripping of *Amrit* contained in the "Moon", or *Sadashiv*, in the *Sahasrar chakr* in the region of our forehead. This precious fluid, this vital *bindu* is lapped up and immediately dried up by the "Sun"—the *Kundlini* that stays coiled up at the bottom of the *Sushumna*, at the *Mooladhar*, blocking the passage, and destroying and consuming the vital fluid. By taking to *Vipreetkarni*, the positions of the 'Sun' and the 'Moon' are reversed and the vital fluid thus saved. They say that he who can perform this *mudra* for three hours a day becomes immune to dacay, and invulnerable to death. As the *Hath Yog Pradipika* has it :

"Above the navel and below the palate respectively, are the *Surya* and the *Chandra*. The exercise, called the *Viparita karani* (inverted body); is learnt from the *guru's* instructions...Place the head on the ground and the feet up into the sky, for a second only the first day, and increase this time daily. After six months wrinkles and grey hair are not seen. He who practises it daily, even for three hours, conquers death."

Obviously the Sexo-*Yogic* posture, in which the *Vipreetkarni* is taken to, would confer on the participants both benefits, that of *Yog's* praxis and Love's pleasure.

One can elaborate upon the theme endlessly, for once the alliance of the enemies, *Yog* and *Kam*, was achieved, much was put together that appeared earlier to be irreconcilable, and absurd in one and the same context, but which now provided at one single point the blessedness of desire fulfilled as well as of *Yogic* self-control.

Regarding the *asans* proper, there are four categories. Some of these concern the business of prolonging the act and retentivity—stopping the male ejaculation in this case altogether so that, for the woman, there is an eternity of passion at its peak. Even ordinarily a man might test it out that he can arrest through *Sheershasan* the emission of his semen, should this be about to take place in a dream. If he wakes even a split-second before the actual ejaculation, and puts his legs up and holds his breath, the flow is arrested. When this is done in the Sexo-*Yogic* postures, the intention as well as the results are obvious. The difficulty for the average male would be to be able to achieve the necessary erection in that posture. Since it is the rush of blood to the organ which causes that erection, this should not be possible in the head-pose for the blood would move towards the head. That is where the *sadhna* of the *yogi* helps. When the individual arrives at the *Dharana* and the *Dhyan* stage of the *Ashtang-Yog*, outlined by Patanjali, he could will his blood or his *Pran* energy into whatever part or limb of his body he would, including the generative organ—since this also is but a part of the body. In this pose, he could be of service and use not only to one but to any number of women. Verily, the *Shivling* is personified in this man. The enjoyer may have her fill of him for he is imperishable. By the way, in several ancient cults outside India, women used some form of the *lingam* for deflowering themselves.

The *Sheershasan* is not the only pose which helps achieve the effect described above, though it is perhaps the superlative thing in this respect. The *Shavasan* may also be used for the same purpose. The rest of the body perfectly relaxed, the woman may be allowed to be the active partner indulging herself with the 'freshly dead body' of a strong and beautiful and desirable male. There are cases on record when a man, who has been hot with lust, has had his sexual satisfaction with a dead woman. True, in the case of the male it is the more easily possible, for the woman's body may stay passive even when she is alive and he would be able to have his satisfaction, although this satisfaction would be a far cry from that feeling of inexpressible joy which comes through a corresponding intensity of desire and cooperation on the part of the female partner. None the less, it is not only possible to have that satisfaction but the fact is that in a large majority of cases this is the normal way. For the female, it would be difficult to have intercourse with a male whom she can use only as a completely passive body and in the case of a dead man obviously such would be the case. On the other hand, a sex-pose, in which the woman plays the active role, the man lies supine, the *Shavasan*, would provide an ideal and ideally relaxed partner. Once again the *yogi* would, through his will and control, send his *pran-shakti* into the *lingam* and let the woman do the rest. Such permutations and combinations in respect of the *yogic* bodies can be carried through other poses also.

The second category is that of poses which are intended to indicate the adjustment a *yogi* may make in respect of unions, described in the *Kam-Sutra* of Vatsyayan, which are not right fits. At the temple of Lingraj in Bhubneswar we see an example of a tall and big male who is engaged in the sexual act with a female who is so short that he has to lift her up like one lifts up a small child. Their union is incongruous, ungainly and obviously not right. Nevertheless, life is a matter of misfits, to a very large extent ; and the student of sex generally and the *yogi*, in particular—since his body is plastic material which he could handle at will—should be able to offer solutions to such problems. Many of the Sexo-*Yogic* poses are, therefore, intended to provide graphic lessons on what can be done to rectify such situations. As we have said above, the body of the *yogi* is the servant of his will, and so it can make all such adjustments as will provide proper satisfaction. The so-called contortions and convulsions of the limbs, that we see in many a case, should not be regarded as variations on the theme for the sake of variety. They are not even intended as a full representation of the *Yog* of sex, if one might call it that, the eight-limbed *Yog* of Patanjali, which we have talked about in connection with the first category of Sexo-*Yogic* postures. Here, the whole idea is to let the body of the *yogi* so posture itself that it creates conditions of perfect fitting for the woman. For satisfactory union, many may be the ways and many readjustments necessary. The idea is to reach the goal and it is in that, that the body of the *yogi*, being completely manageable and pliable, can suit itself to the means, and to the requirements of the other, the other being in this case, woman—representing the world, to serve which is one of the aims of the *yogi*.

The third category is connected with the new philosophy of the *Yog* of *Bhog*. In this, obviously, there would be categories within categories indicating the various stages. We have seen that according to *Tantric* philosophy, every woman is worthy of worship. She is Goddess. And contrary to merely any one aspect of her being accepted, she should be worthy of worship in all her being. The litanies of the Goddess, the hymns of worship and homage, do not stop short of describing aught when they are describing her beauty. They praise also the private parts. The eye and the tongue do not flinch when they have to take cognizance of these, since these too, are aspects of the total personality of the Goddess. Her beauty and her desirability as female are an essential part of her being, and so one means of paying homage to her would be to experience a fervent passion, a maddening desire and 'lust' for her. The difference is that this passion and 'lust' are as pure as can be, for they are part of the worshipful attitude. No disparagement, no dishonour is intended. There is no question of regarding such an attitude as the taken-for-granted attitude of the average male about the yielding female. Here, our whole being is permeated with an urge for merging into the deity and the so called sex-urge is part of this total urge. That is all. But this is just one side of the total philosophy. There is, in the *Tantric* way of worship, a place for *maithun* in its own legitimate right. This depends on the kind of person and takes into consideration the three categories of men who are engaged in this worship, as also the nine steps or stages of achievement—achievement which culminates in the man becoming perfect, Kaul, until he may engage in *maithun* with anybody and yet remain free.

Many of the Sexo-*Yogic* postures on temple walls reflect repercussions of the philosophy of *Bhog*, the new path of desire leading to deliverance, of love carrying us to liberation, with woman and sex as the way and vehicle, as the engine and instrument thereof. Since this philosophy is in itself a form of *Yog*, the *Yog* of *Bhog*, all this is merely indulgence, not *sexual* indulgence. It is a part of the total *sadhna* and one must be very careful in forming notions. We have already said that for the perfect *yogi* engaged in this, there is no emission, no detumescence. As a matter of fact, in the body of the perfect *yogi*, there is no semen as such, since having passed through this stage, the liquid has become nectar which keeps dripping for ever in a bliss-giving stream in that part of one's brain where the *Sadashiv* resides. Any way, there is no question of any ejaculation, any coming off. Again, the final stage, of the sexual act, is reached progressively through other parts of the act of worship. Measured food, measured drink and measured movement, and preliminaries, whether of song, dance or touching or embracing the *mudra*—all these have gone before. Furthermore, the man and woman are consecrated, are converted into god and goddess, or made the servants of these, before they may engage in the ritual. This is no idle love-making and no idle love-maker should attempt it.

The fourth category is a civilised kind of *Yogic* exercises. It is part of the penance of the older type. Removed from the philosophy of *Bhog* as *Yog*, it is the representation of the practices, in the field of sex, of the *yogis* known as the *Aghor yogis*. They are *yogis* we may come across even today ; those who have, for years, stood on one leg ; or who have lifted one arm and kept it in that pose ; or who have starved themselves or chained themselve to some tree or stone, or put nails in their body or done other things of an extreme nature. The Buddha recorded his acquaintance with such practices. In fact, it was because he revolted against such extremity of penance that he took to meditation, and adopted the middle path in his approach. Now, one form which this kind of extreme penance takes is to go in for revolting practices. These *yogis* still believe that sex is sin, that body is dirt, that sex activity is folly, and it is because the sex act is a disgraceful thing, a seemingly despicable and repulsive activity, that they engage in it just as they would eat and drink foul things and engage in all manner of abject acts. They go further. In the range of sex, they will go for the lower and the looser type. The fouler, the better, from their point of view. This category, therefore, covers *yogis* of a different view and level. They are seemingly engaged in the same kind of activity, but their whole view is entirely different. They act on a comparatively lower plane. The

Kaul approaches the matter as one who is genuinely beyond all sense of good and evil. He is completely free, as *Jeevan-Mukt*, *Poorn Yati*, from the effect of whatever he does. He is beyond the effect of the law of *Karm* and beyond the darkness of attributes, of good and evil, of right and wrong, etc. Withal, his body is merely a perfect and detached machine so that on the mind no scar is left of what it does. They say about the Buddhat hat he would go begging for his food, and would accept without question whatever was put in his bowl, whether it was the cleanest of food, or the uncleanest, fresh or stale, eatable or unfit for consumption, poison or nectar, dirt or the most delectable dish. Some such thing is happening here. You and I are swayed by the look of the face, by the curve of the body, by the grace of the figure. There is the desirable person and there is the disagreeable person. Not for the Kaul. His is the *Maitri-roop*, equally well disposed to all without distinction of any sort. As a doctor must attend to all patients, as a courtesan must cater to all persons, as God must be gracious to all creatures—such is the Kaul. He is for all.

Within this category, there is the other variety, of the *Aghor*. As explained already, they are also shown engaged in the same kind of activity but for a different reason. That is why we find them united in the sexual act with the foulest of females or copulating with animals or doing other things which are regarded as sexual offences, as unnatural and undesirable and unhealthy. The whole range of such sexual activity, fellatio, cunnilinctus, and the reverse poses and all sorts of contortions and convulsions may be seen represented on the temple walls under this category. All this is still *Yog* and would properly belong to Sexo-*Yogic* postures. Although engaged in all these activities, all these men are far away, in a different world, and are all heroes, conquerors. Conquerors not of the type that kept away from sex and desire, but those who understand the nature of the enemy and can master it. They use many different ways of controlling this terrible force, but the achievement and the end are the same : complete mastery of *Kam*. They employ desire for the one and only purpose and aim of existence, and of *Yogic sadhna*, namely self-realisation, and, through that, gaining liberation from the cycle of birth and death and re-birth, and merging into the universal soul and to live for ever in eternal bliss.

GLOSSARY OF INDIAN TERMS

Ahankar	:	Ego, Pride.
Akarshini	:	She who attracts.
Akash	:	Sky, Ether, The great beyond ; one of the five elements.
Amrit	:	Elixir, Nectar, Undying ; the drinks that makes one immortal.
Amrit-manthan	:	Churning of the Cosmic Ocean for obtaining *Amrit.*
Anand	:	Joy, Bliss.
Apsara	:	Young and attractive female dancers of heaven, especially of Indra's heaven.
Ardhnarishwar	:	Shiv Androgynous, deity in half-male, half-female form.
Asan	:	Posture.
Bhakti	:	Worship, devotion.
Bhakti-yog	:	Path of Salvation through devotion.
Bhog	:	Enjoyment, experience of existence.
Brahm (*an*)	:	All-pervading Divine Cause ; the Soul of souls ; the Supreme Spirit.
Brahmchari	:	Celebate ; he who is as yet in the first *ashram.*
Brahmcharini	:	A woman leading a life of continence, virgin.
Brahmcharya	:	Celebacy, continence.
Chakr	:	A circle ; subtle centre in the body ; mystic circle relating to *Tantric* worship.
Chakravak	:	An Indian bird.
Chakra puja	:	Tantric worship in which the participants sit in a circle
Chatak	:	An Indian bird.
Chin-Achar	:	Chinese mode of conduct.
Chitta	:	Lower mind.
Dev/Devta	:	God.
Devi	:	Goddess.
Devdasi	:	Literally, maid of the gods ; temple-dancer.
Dharna	:	Mind's-concentration on one object ; the sixth 'limb' of '*Yog*'.
Dhyan	:	Meditation.
Gandharv (marriage)	:	A form of marriage in which man and woman merely take a mutual pledge to be husband and wife.
Geeta	:	The Hindu gospel; according to Krishn ; Krishn's celebrated sermon to Arjun.
Grihasth	:	Married life ; the second *ashram.*
Guna	:	Quality.
Gunas	:	Qualities of Nature—these are three : 1. *Sattva* (Pure) 2. *Rajas* (Heroic) 3. *Tamas* (Dark).
Gyan Yog	:	The path of knowledge ; the realization of God through inquiry and meditation.
Hath Yog	:	A form of yog which places great emphasis on the physical body.
Ishwar	:	Lord ; God ; in particular a title of Shiv.
Jap	:	Chanting, or mentally repeating the name of God.
Jeev	:	A living being.
Jeev-atma	:	The individual soul.
Kaivalya	:	Liberation, Perfection, state in which Man's pure consciousness is not disturbed by the lure of the world and affections of the mind.
Kaivalyapad	:	The status of *Kaivalya.*
Kam	:	Desire, generally ; sexual desire ; Hindu god of Desire.

Kanya : Virgin.
Karm : The Law of cause and effect.
Karm Yog : The path of Action, or realising God through action, through service of all creatures.
Kokila : Cuckoo.
Krodh : Anger.
Kundlini : Latent energy described as lying coiled up, like a serpent, in a cavity near the base of the spine.
Kurma : Tortoise.
Kush : A kind of grass.
Lingam : Symbol; phallic-shaped emblem of Shiv.
Lobh : Greed.
Mahayogi : The great ascetic; Shiv.
Maithun : Copulation.
Makar : That which begins with the latter 'M'. See *Panch-Makar*.
Mandar : The mountain that was used as the churning stick in the operation for obtaining *Amrit*.
Mandir : A temple.
Mantra : A mystical syllable or formula.
Mar : Buddhist god, combining attributes of Kam and Yam, Desire & Death.
Maya : Illusion; its personification.
Mithun : Couple-in-embrace.
Moh : Infatuation.
Mohini : She who causes infatuation; the form, of the beautiful woman, which Vishnu assumed to beguile the demons at the time of distribution of *Amrit*.
Mooladhar : A *chakr*, lotus, mystic centre, located in the lower spine; pelvic plexus.
Mudra : One of the five essentials of *Tantric* worship: meaning variously corn, gold, gesture, etc. *Hath yogic* posture which produces electric currents or forces.
Mukti : Salvation.
Muni : One who practises silence or abstention from speech; an ascetic.
Munj : A kind of grass.
Natraj : The Divine Dancer; Shiv.
Nirbij : Literally, seedless; the 'absolute' *Samadhi*.
Nirvan : Ceasing to be, salvation.
Niyam : Observances; second limb of *Yog*.
Panch Makars : The Five M's; five essentials of the *Tantric* form of worship, all beginning with the letter M.
Panch Tattav : Five elements of the *Tantric* mode of worship.
Param-atma : The Supreme Soul.
Pasham : Bond.
Pashu : That which is bound; the bound soul; popularly, an animal.
Pashu-bhav : Animal-sentiment.
Pashupati : Lord of the creatures; Shiv.
Prakriti : Nature; literally that which has been created 'before': material or manifest world.
Pran : The vital breath.
Pratibha : Intellect, light.
Pratyahar : Withdrawal; fifth limb of *Yog*.
Puja : Worship.
Pujya : Worthy (of worship).
Purush : The Supreme Being; man; the male of the species.
Rag : Desire, attachment; a daughter of Mar.

Rajas	Dynamic, heroic (Quality).
Raj Yog	System of *Yog* in which the man within asserts himself as the *Raja* (King) of all his physical and mental powers.
Rati	Pleasure; Kam's wife; name of a daughter of Mar.
Rishi	An inspired seer.
Sadhak	Practicant.
Sadhna	Praxis; sustained spiritual effort.
Samadhi	Superconscious state; final state in *Yogic* praxis
Sanyam/Samyam	Self control, Portion of *Raj Yog* consisting of three limbs: *Dharna, Dhyan, Samadhi.*
Sansar	The material World.
Sat	Existent; an aspect of the Self.
Sattva	Pure (quality).
Shakt	The worshipper of *Shakti*, Energy, the goddess.
Shakti	Energy; goddess manifesting that; divine power; mother of the universe.
Shakii-puja	Worship os Shakti.
Sesh	The serpent that serves as the 'bed' of Visnu, and whose bood fans his head, used as the 'rope' for churning the Cosmic Ocean.
Shunyata	Comptiness, void; especially as the Buddhist concept.
Siddhi	Physical and psychic power.
Sthir	Firm, fixed, constant.
Sukham	Happiness.
Tamas	The Dark (quality).
Tanha	Prakrit for *trishna*; acute longing; a daughter of Mar.
Tapas	Heat, penance.
Tapasya	Penance, self-mortification, austere devotion.
Tapovan	Penance-forest.
Van	Forest.
Veer	Hero.
Veer Bhav	Heroic sentiment.
Vibhuti	Super-human power, dominion.
Vibhutipad	The state in which the *yogi* attains super-human powers, and all wealth.
Virasan	A well-known *yogic* posture.
Vrat	A vow; popularly, a 'fast'.
Yam	Control; Ethical vows or abstentions; the first limb of *Yog*; Name of the Hindu god of Death.
Yagya/Yajna	Sacrifice; a religious ceremony.
Yog	Restraint of mental modifications; one of the six Hindu systems of philosophy; Praxis according to this.
Yogi	Man who practises *Yog.*
Yogini	Woman practising *Yog.*
Yogmaya	A Yogi's (magical) power of creating (illusion).

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A NOTE ON PLATES

Though it can do little justice to this vast theme, the following note will help the reader to have a graphic comprehension of the developments. The pictures have been selected and arranged to depict how things moved

First there was the normal wholeness and wholesomeness of approach towards man and woman and a joyous acceptance of their relationship, as nature intended it. Thanks—or, rather, no thanks—to the attitude of the *Yogi*, then there grew a feeling of antipathy towards Woman. She came to be regarded as the enemy, or, at least, an ally of the enemy, Kam, the god of Desire. Considered as a bundle of attractions, she served him as bait for his catch. Nature produced, and Kam used for his work, countless young and beautiful women. We see a galaxy of these lovely females in a variety of moods and postures. Some of them are engaged in activity relating to the realm of cosmetics and ornamentation or girlish playfulness, Others are content to be and to look beautiful. But idle or busy, they are all the while vaunting their charms to tempt man and, among men, the *Yogi*, in particular, for he offered the greatest resistance, and often posed a threat to Indra's power.

In course of time, a reaction set in and we find woman not only being accepted but also worshipped. Kam, who had been reduced to ashes by Shiv, returned to his work with a vengeance. The pendulum now swung to the other extreme, resulting in much that was startling, at least on the surface. Intricate and subtle philosophies were evolved to justify and sanction woman's adoration, sexual enjoyment, and much else. The *Panch Makar* mode of worship conferred on man *Mahasukh* and *Mahanirvan*, instead of the older riches, *Mukti* and *Nirvan*.

A word about the seemingly 'perverse' and 'orgiastic' Hindusculptures reproduced here. These are explained by some apologists as *guha-bhasha*, secret language, so that they mean very much different from what we think that they do. The *mithun*—couple-in-embrace—symbolises the union of the Creator and the Creature, of *Paramatma*, the Supreme Soul, and *Jeevatma*, the individual soul, of Shiv and Shakti, of god and goddess, of *Nirvan* and *Sansar*, of this world and the next, of the Sun and the Moon, even of *Kam* and *Yog*. In respect of the last, the Sexo-*Yogic* postures, in particular, emphasise that Sex and *Yog* are not opposed to each other, but are merely two aspects of the same phenomenon. Though the earlier, *Shastric* injunctions were clearly against sexual perversion, now the use of the entire body and all manner of attitude in love-play are permitted. If He or She are everywhere, then why any limitations whatever ?

Of course, man and woman, and god and goddess, may be seen at their best in 'clean' embrace, serenely passionate and with expression beatific, with an example or two of which we close our portfolio.

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2 Nara-Narayan, Deogarh.
3 Arjuna's penance—yogi, Mahabalipuram.
4 A Mithun group, Parshvanath temple, South wall, Khajuraho.
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7 Nayika, Belpur.
8 A Sur-sundari figure, Parasnath temple, Ranakpur (Rajasthan).
9 A Sur-sundari. Amba Mata temple, Jagat village (Rajasthan).
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14 Sur-sundari removing thorn, uppermost row, South-west corner, Kandariya Mahadev temple, Khajuraho.
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16 Nayika, Chinnakeshava temple, Belur.
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18 Apsara, South wall, uppermost row, Kandariya Mahadev temple, Khajuraho.
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21 Apsara, Amba Mata temple, Jagat village (Rajasthan).
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23 A Kanya, Rajarani temple, North-west wall, Bhubaneswar.
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28 A Sur-sundari figure, Parasnath temple, Ranakpur (Rajasthan).
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34 Erotic, Sun temple, North wall, Konark.
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45 Erotic, Sun temple,North wall, Konark.
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Acknowledgement

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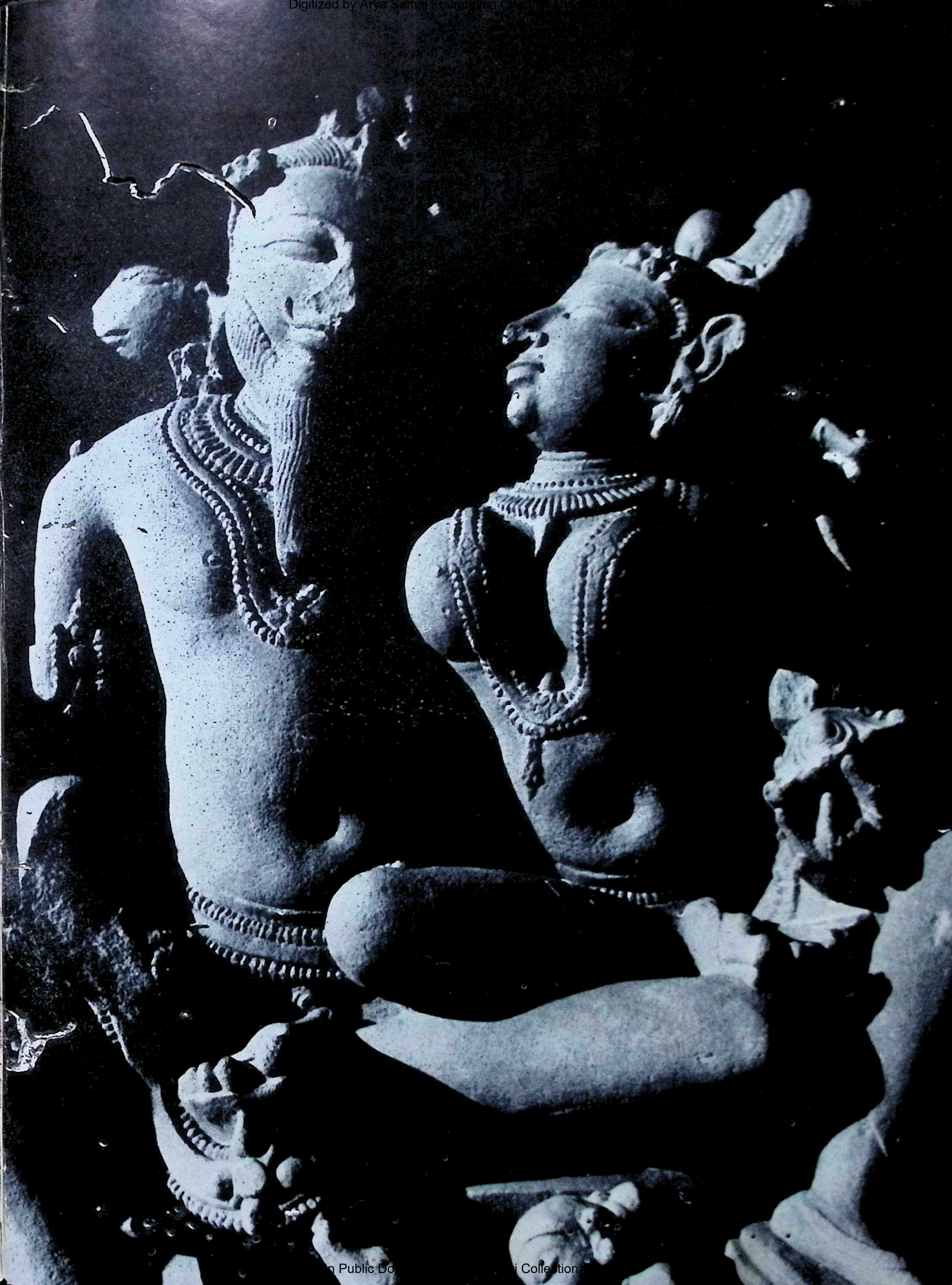

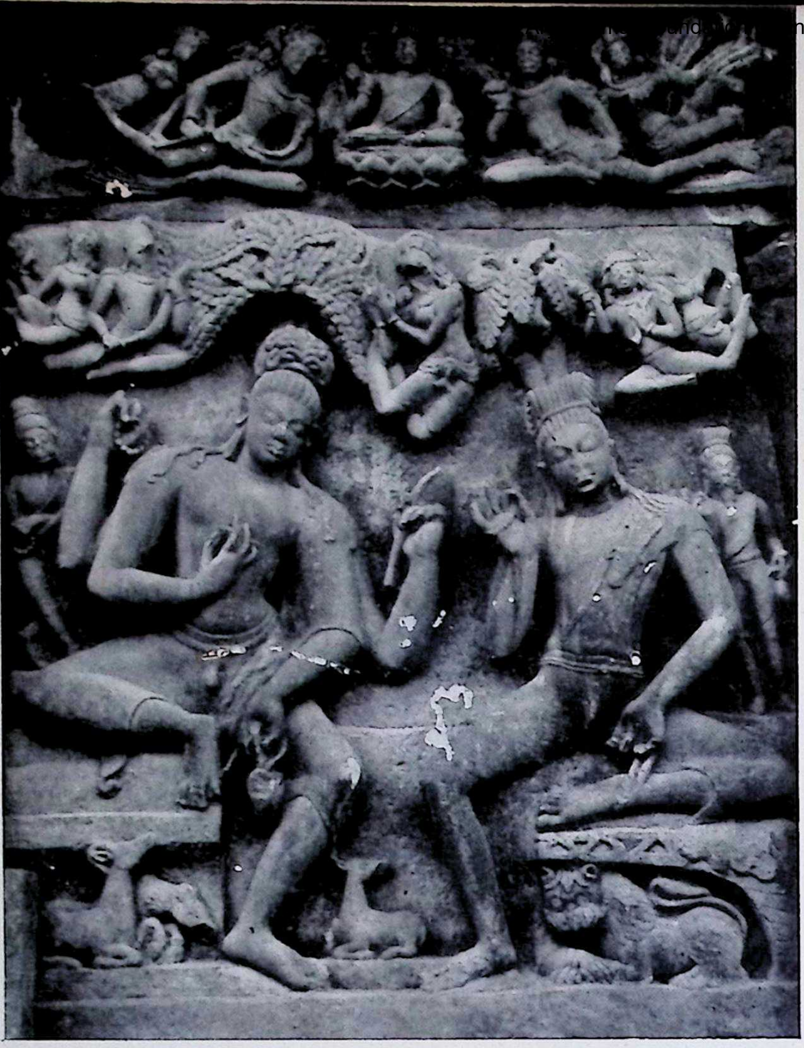

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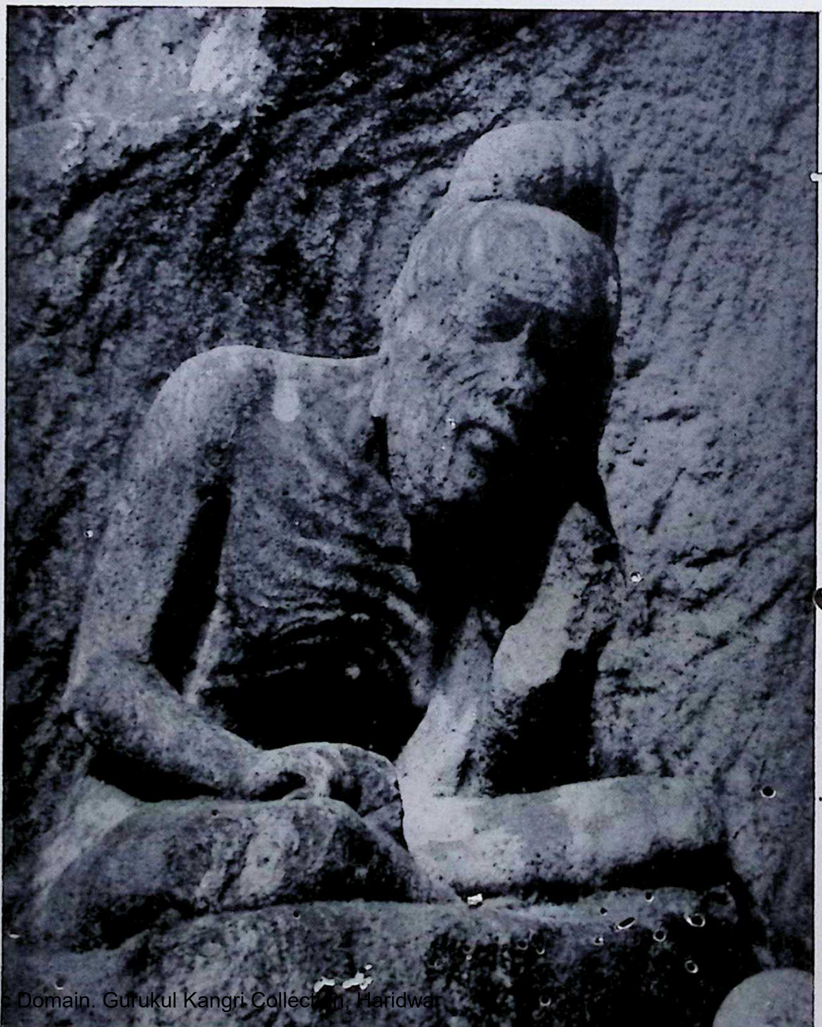

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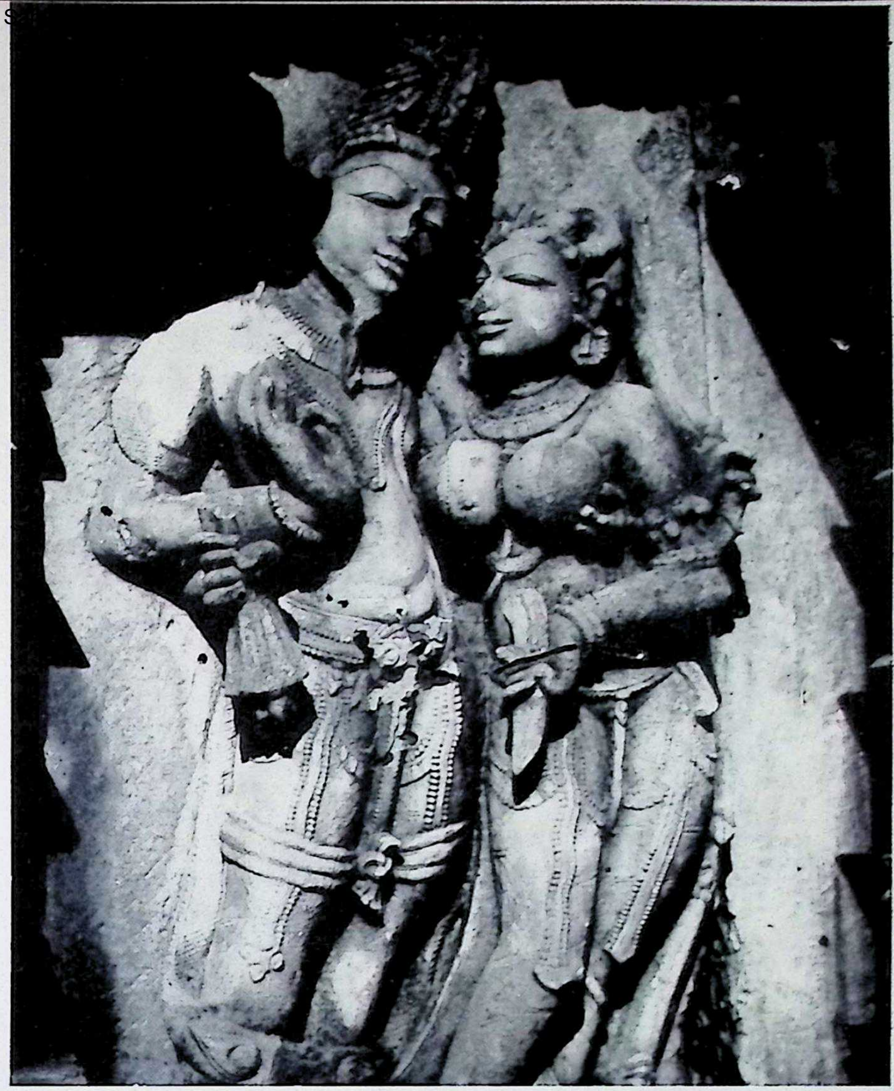

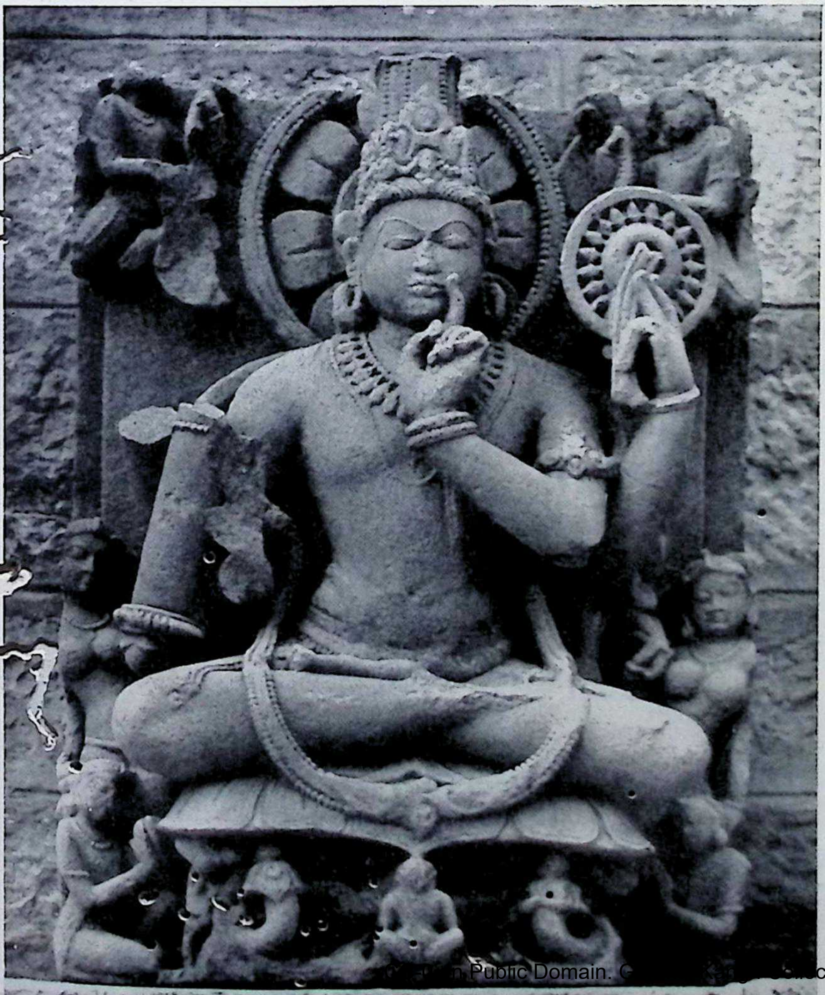

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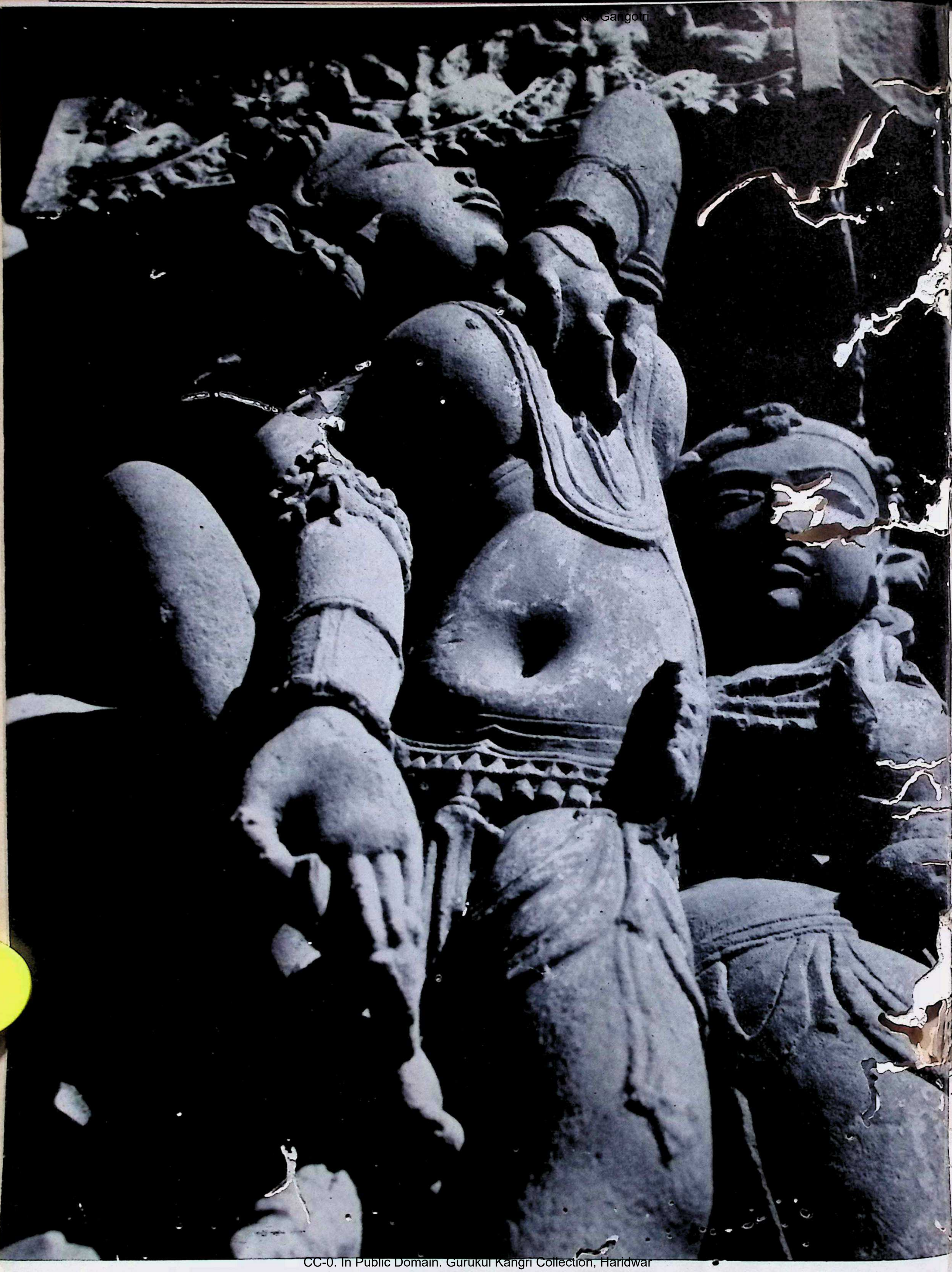

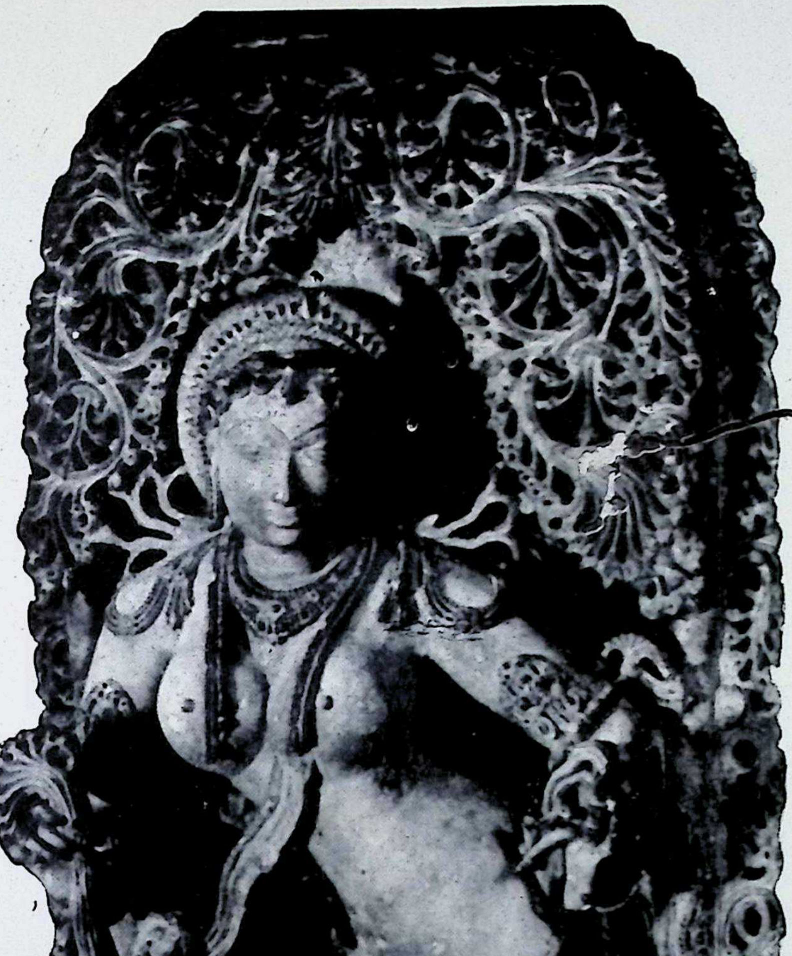

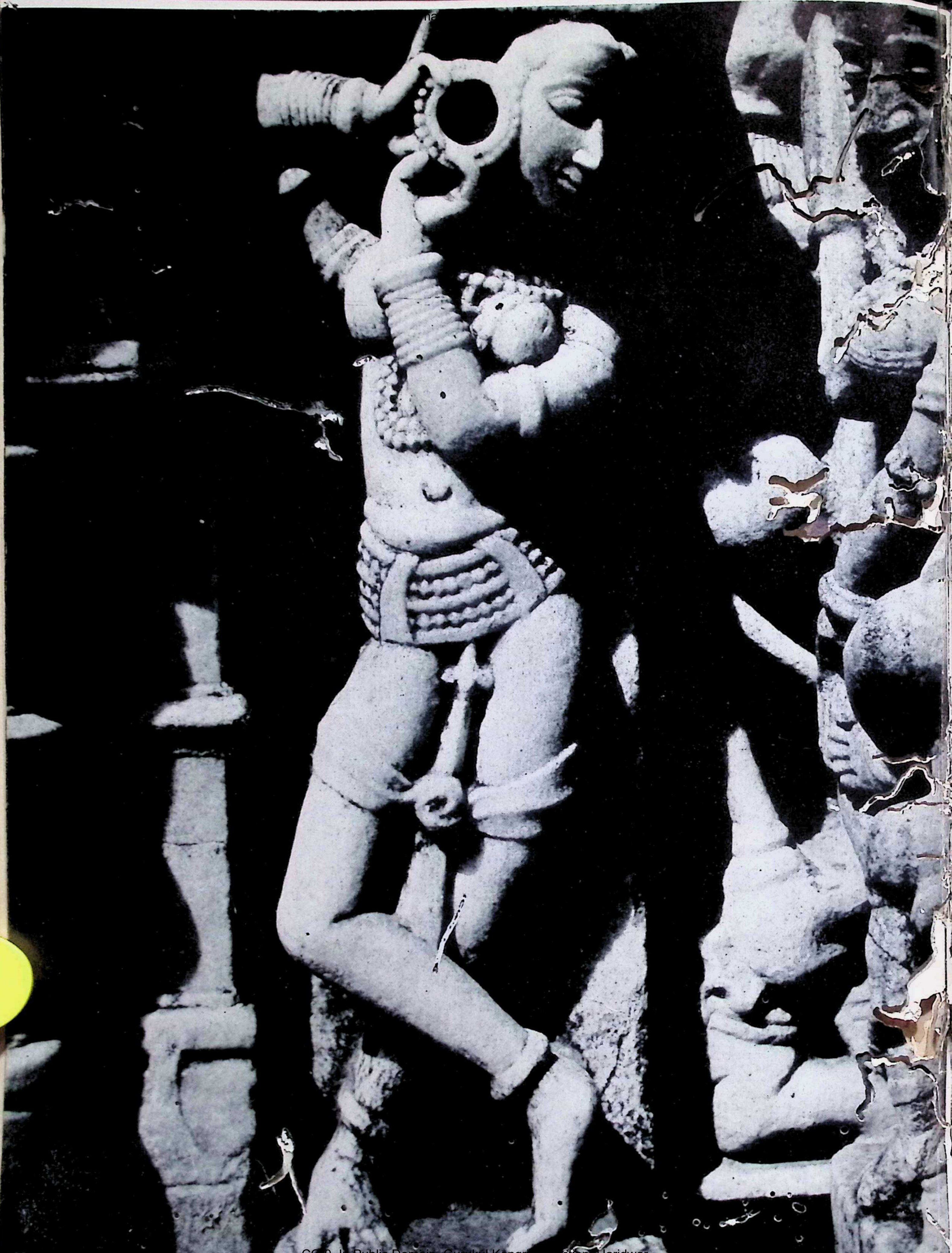

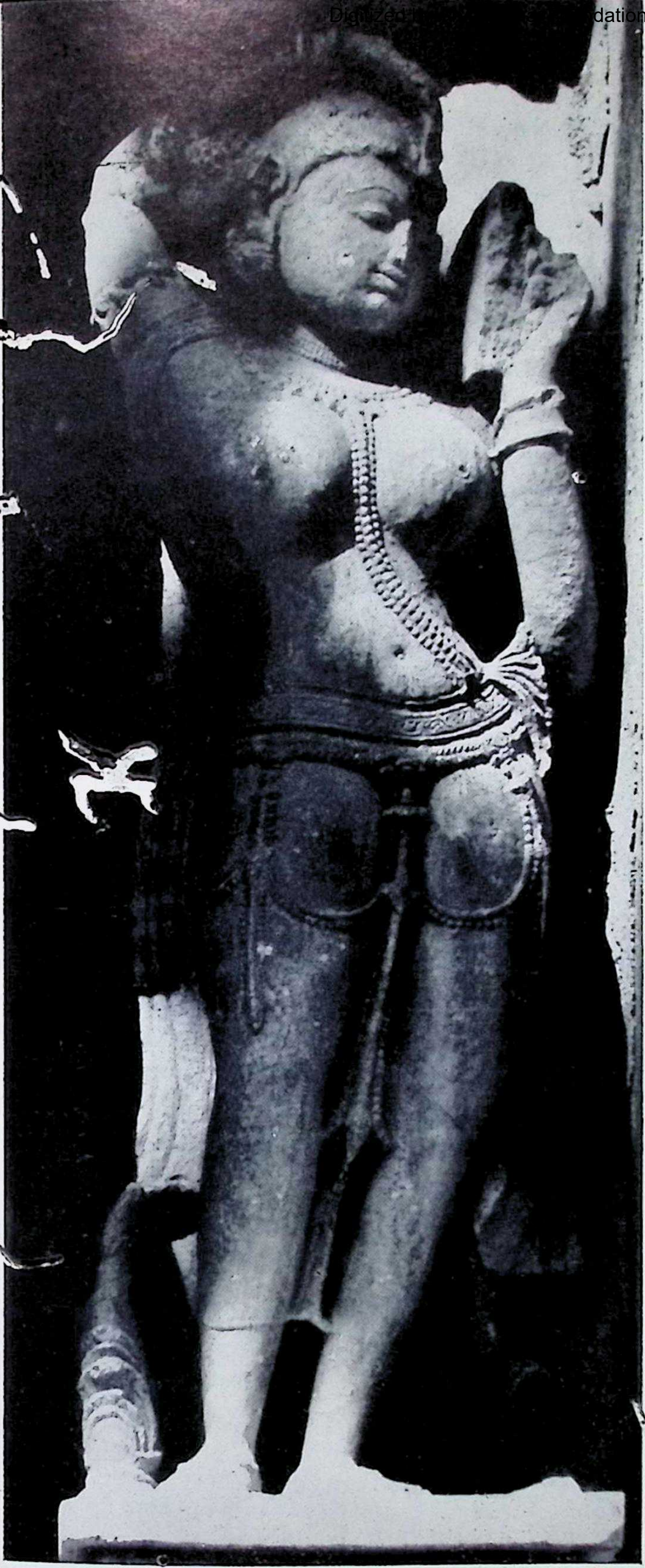

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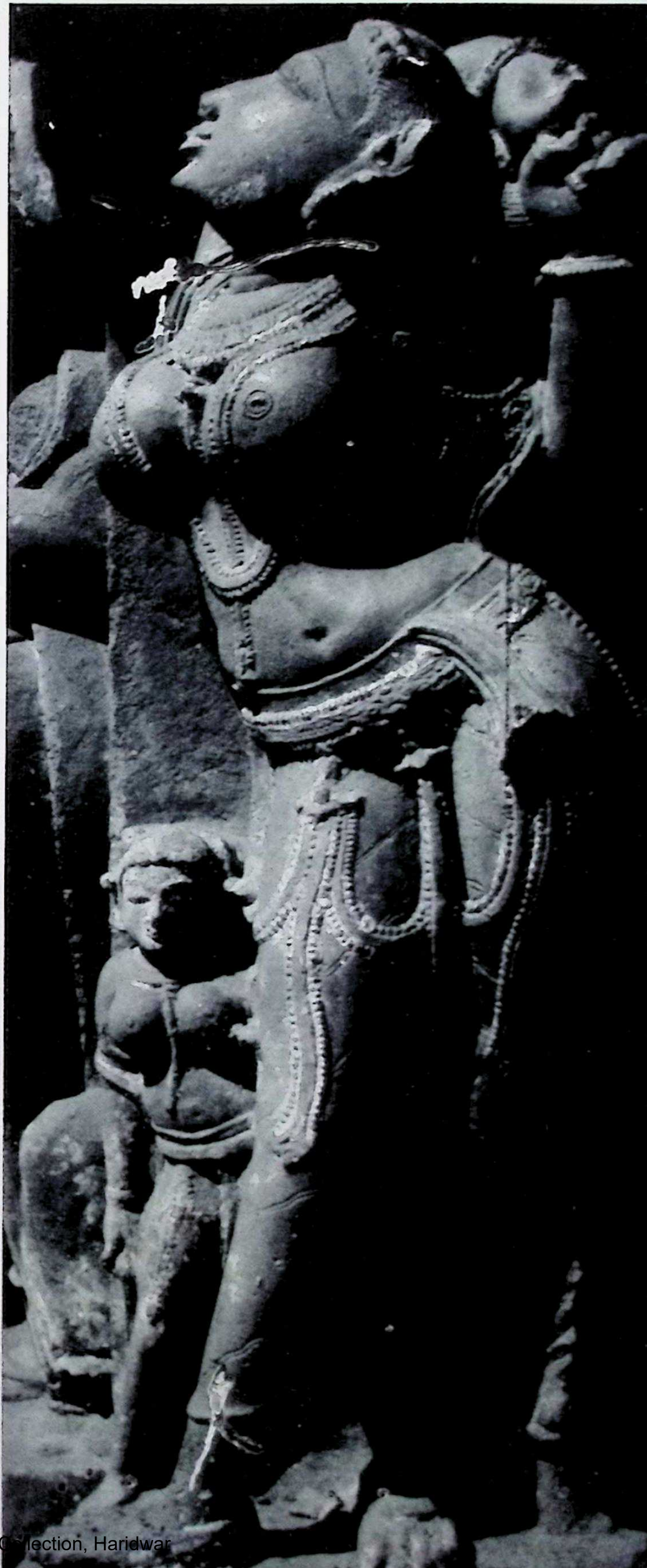

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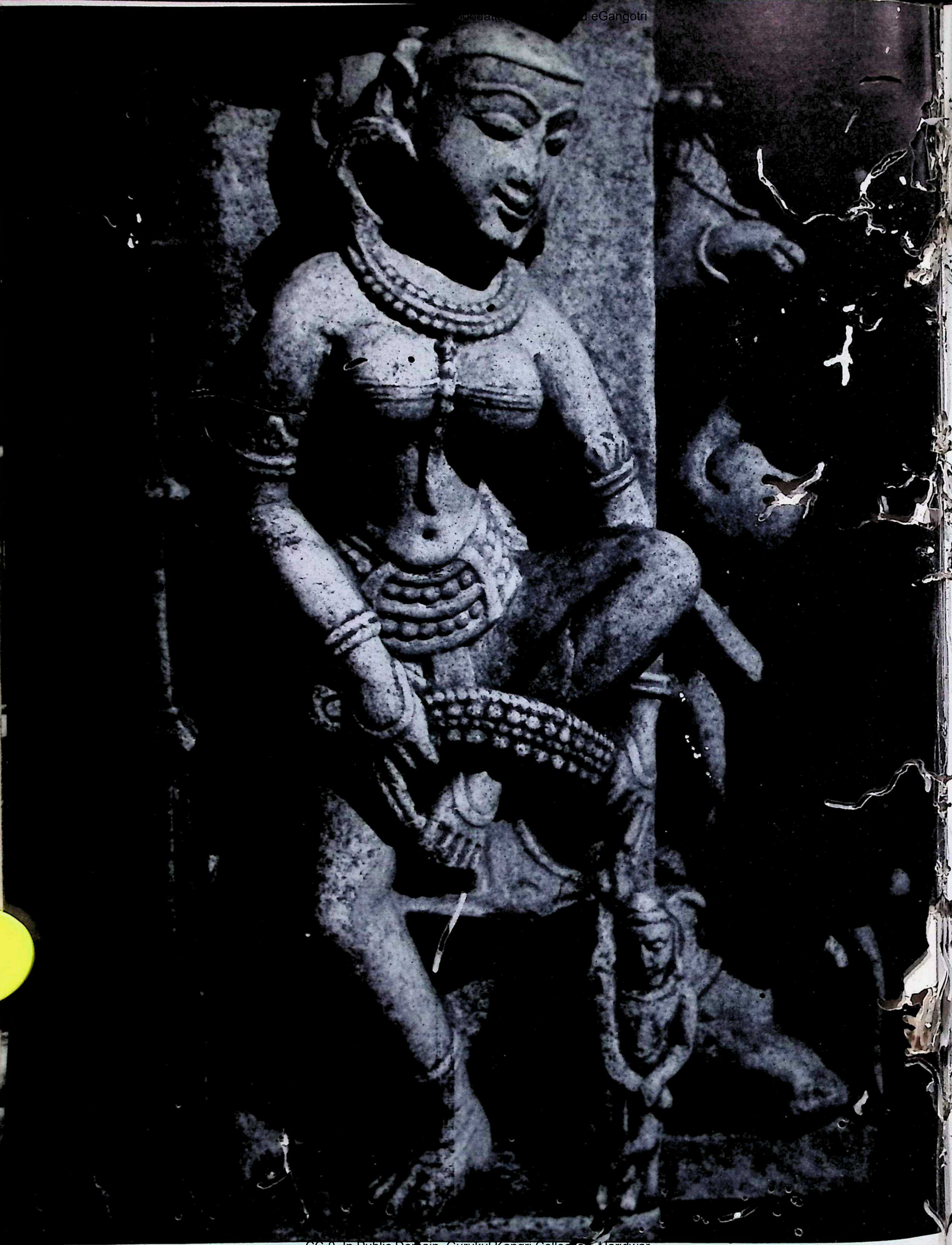

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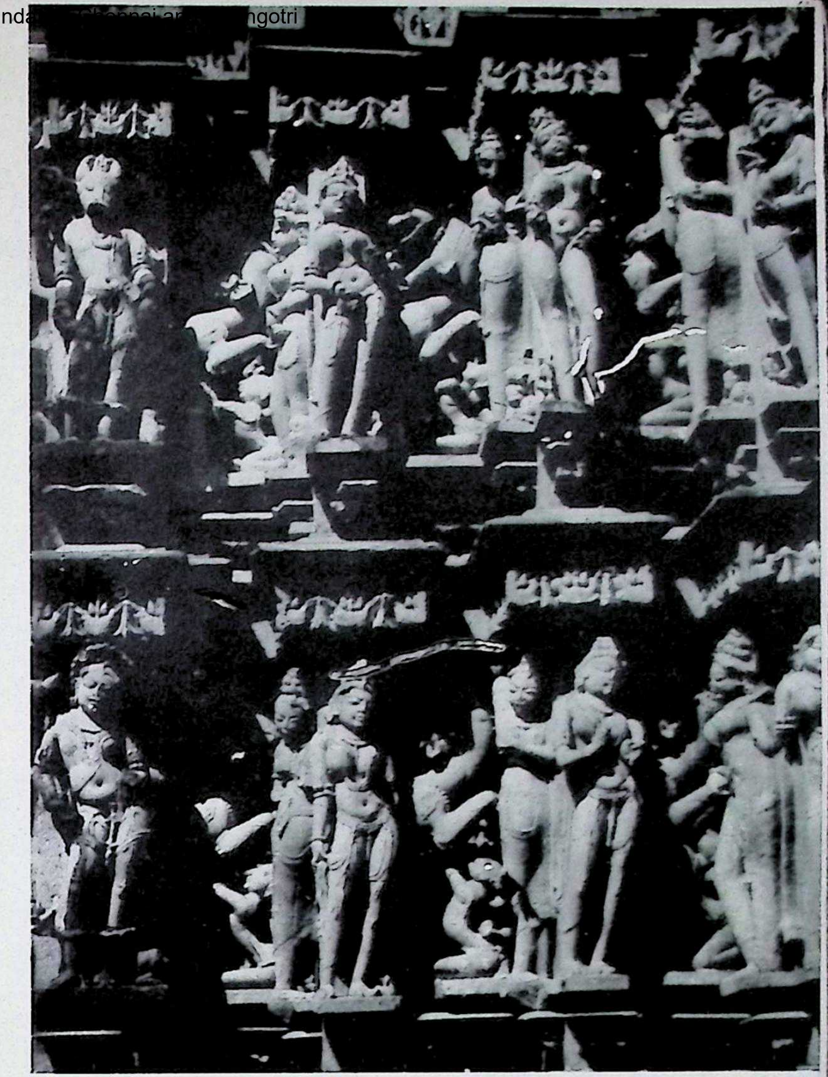

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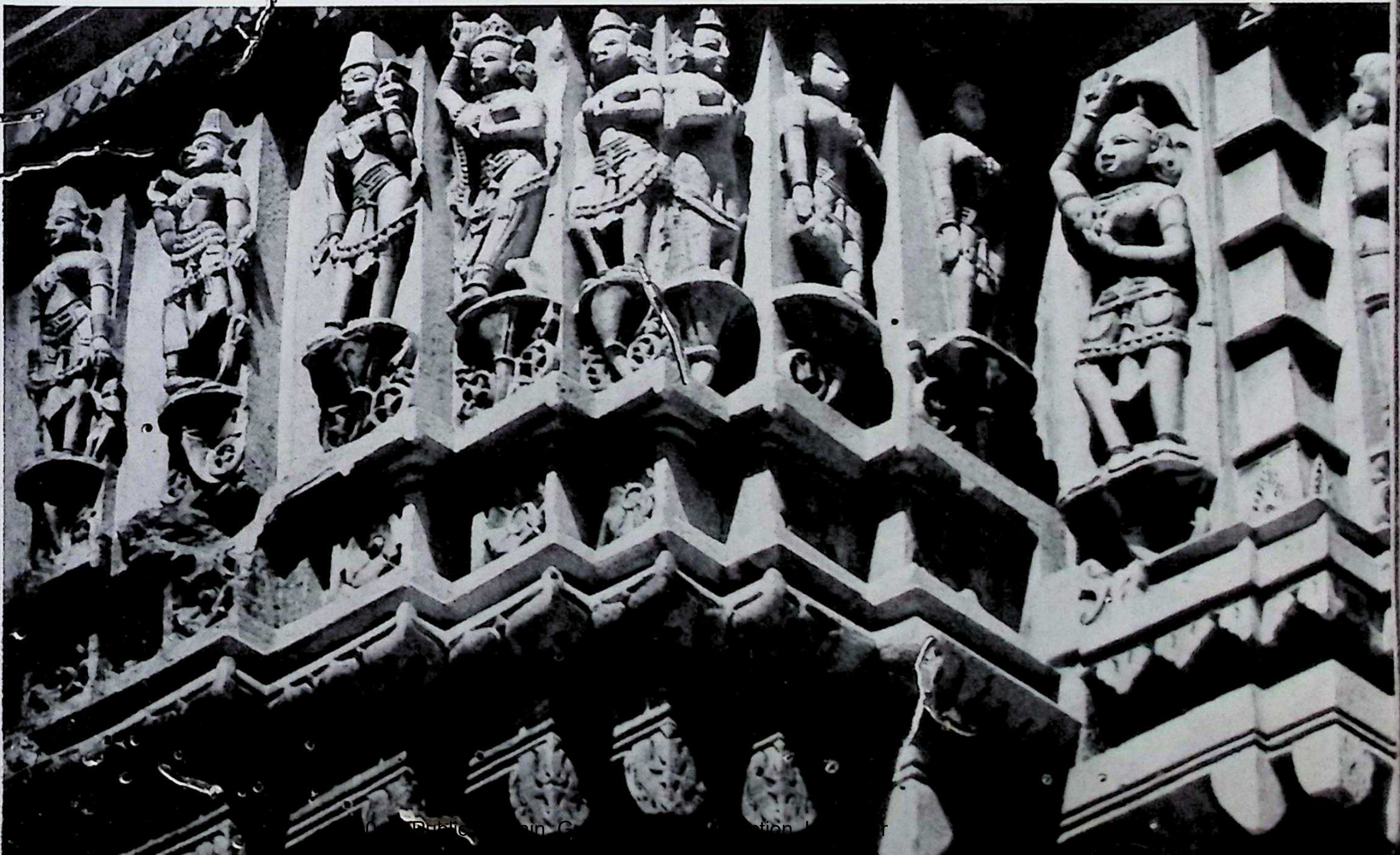

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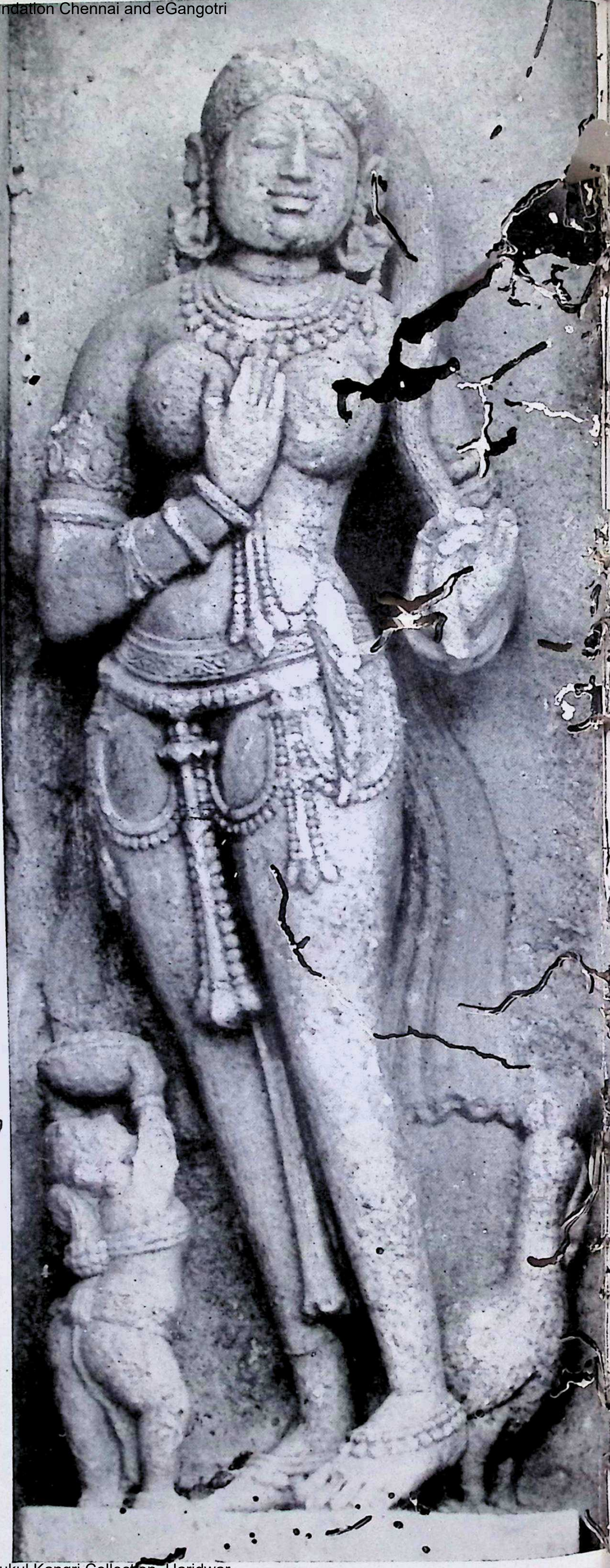

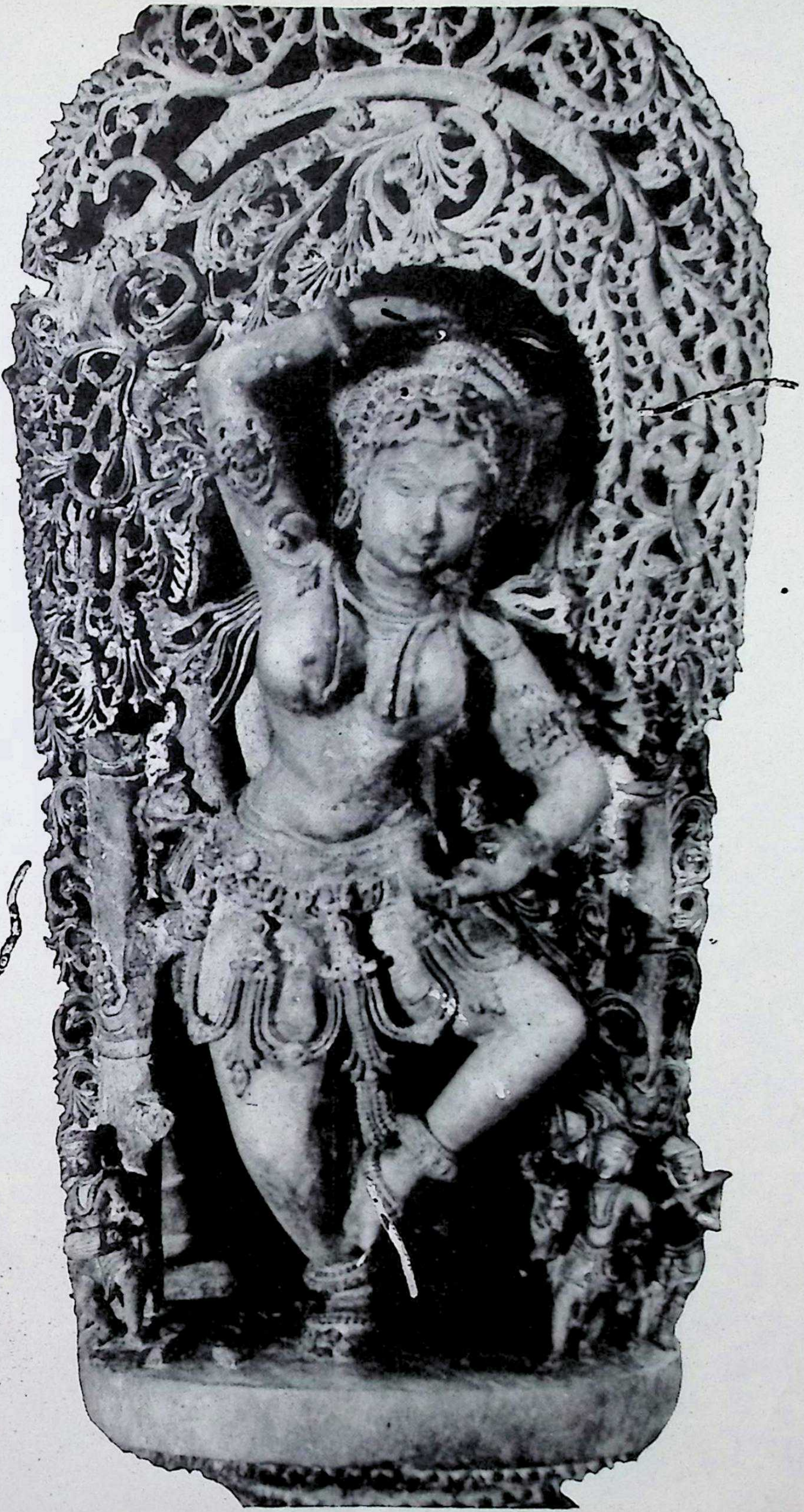

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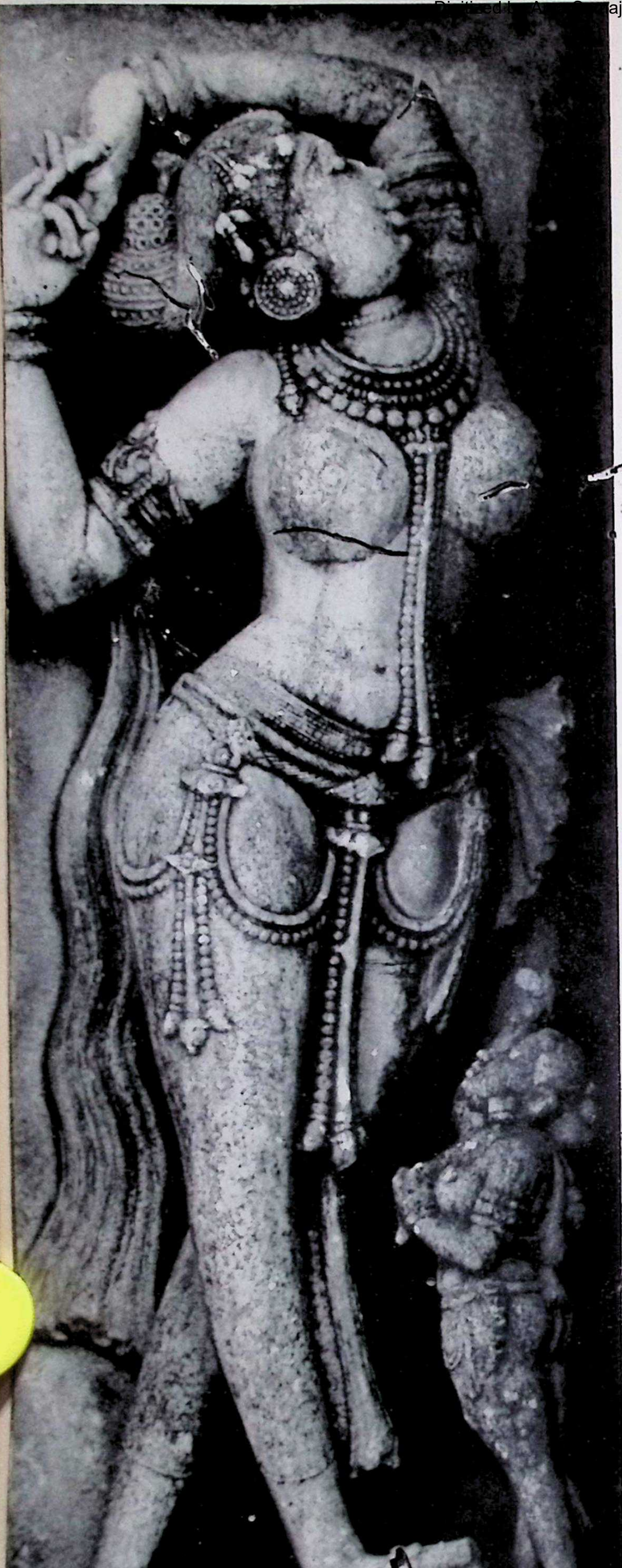

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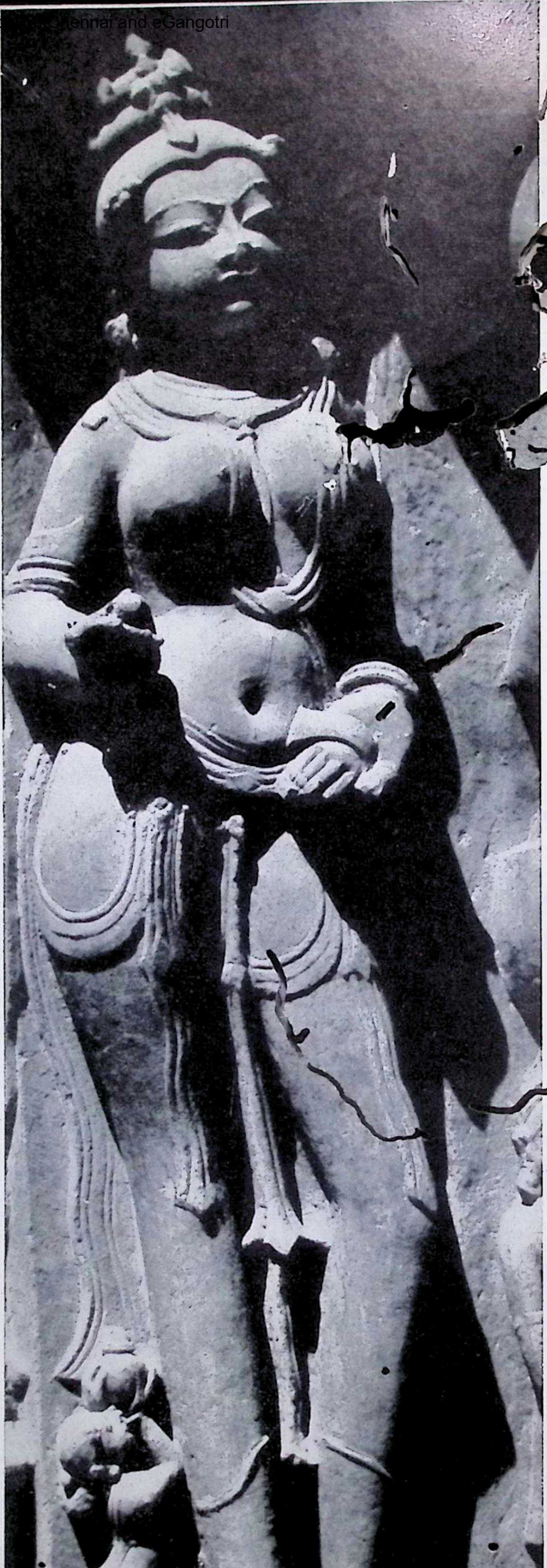

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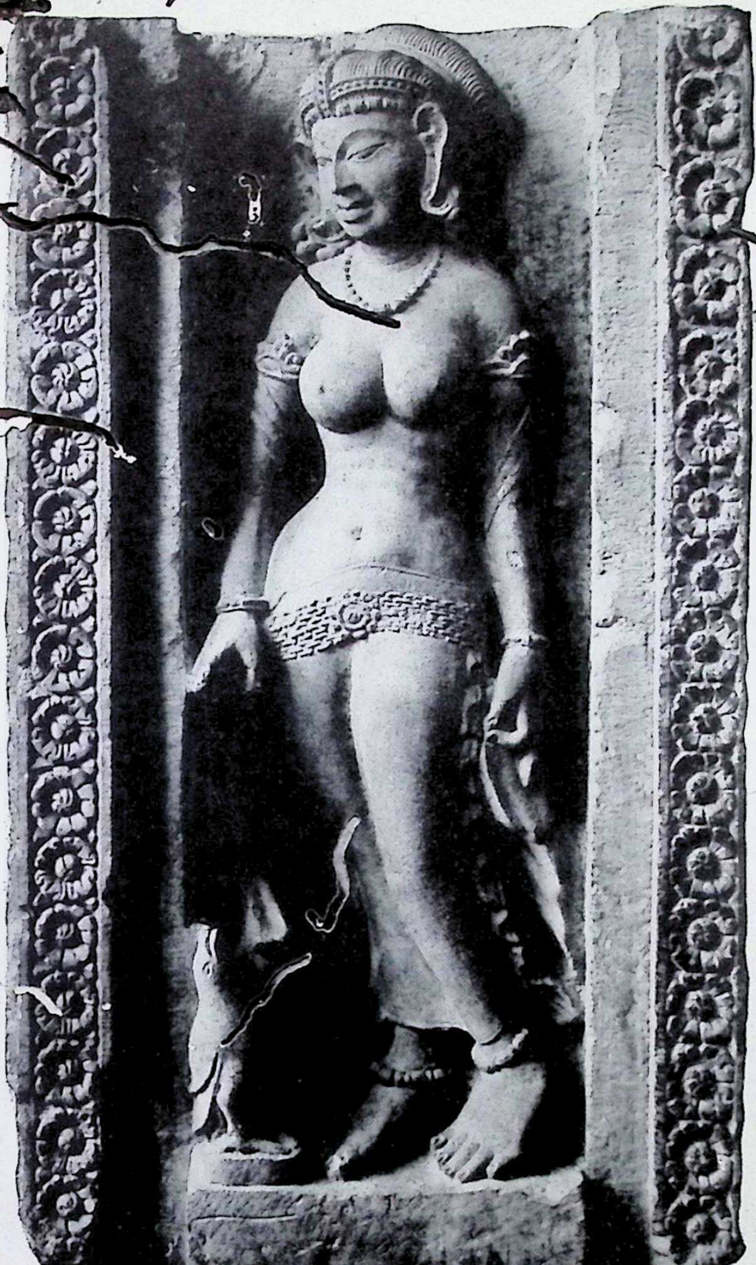

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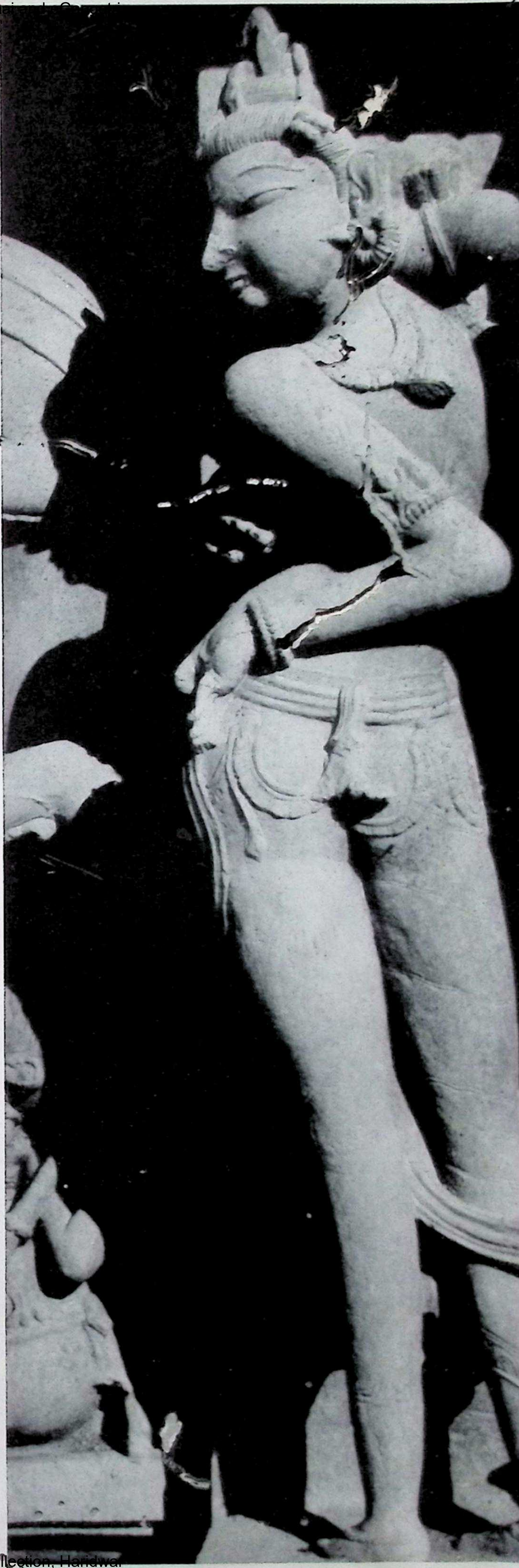

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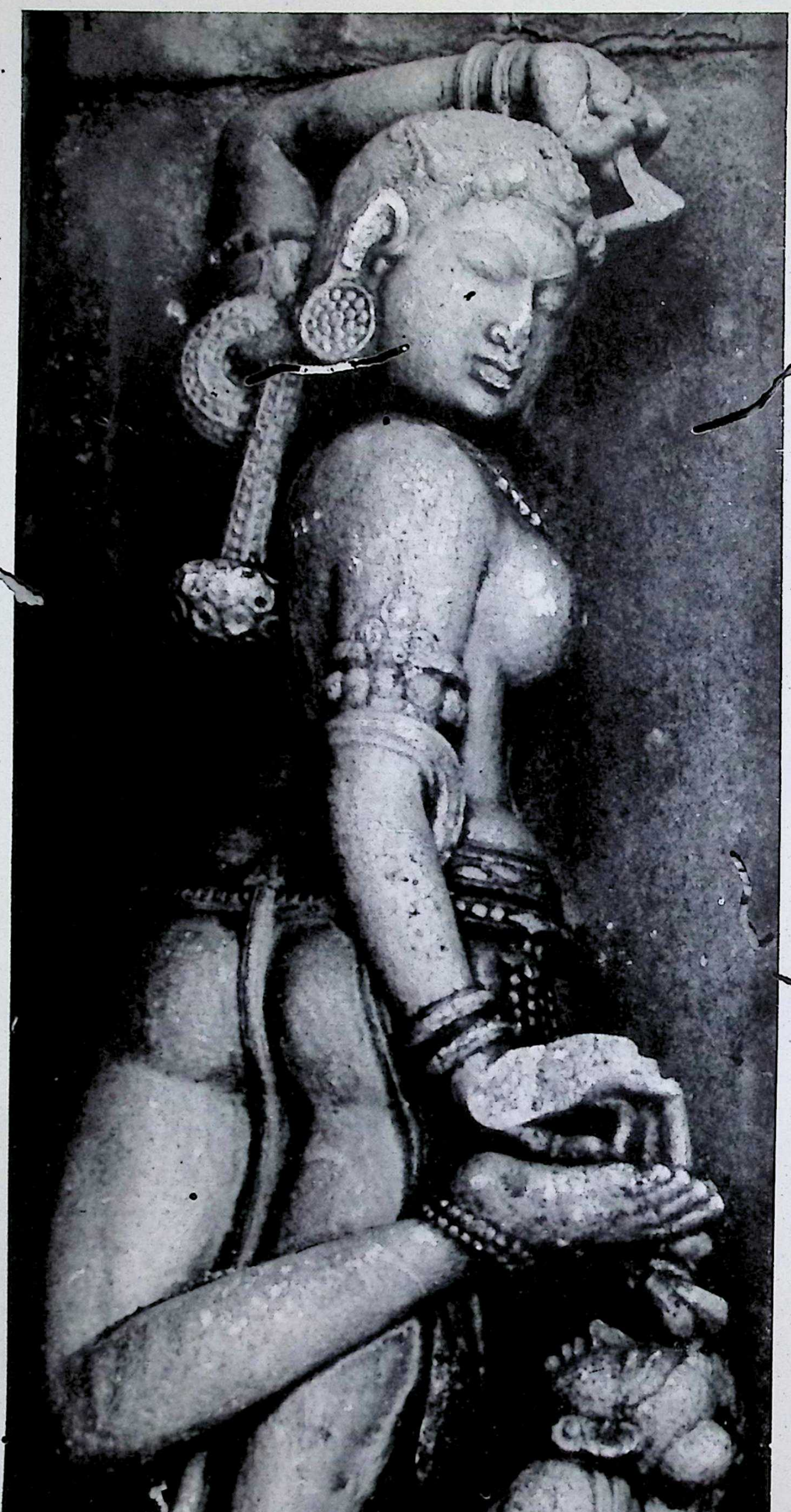

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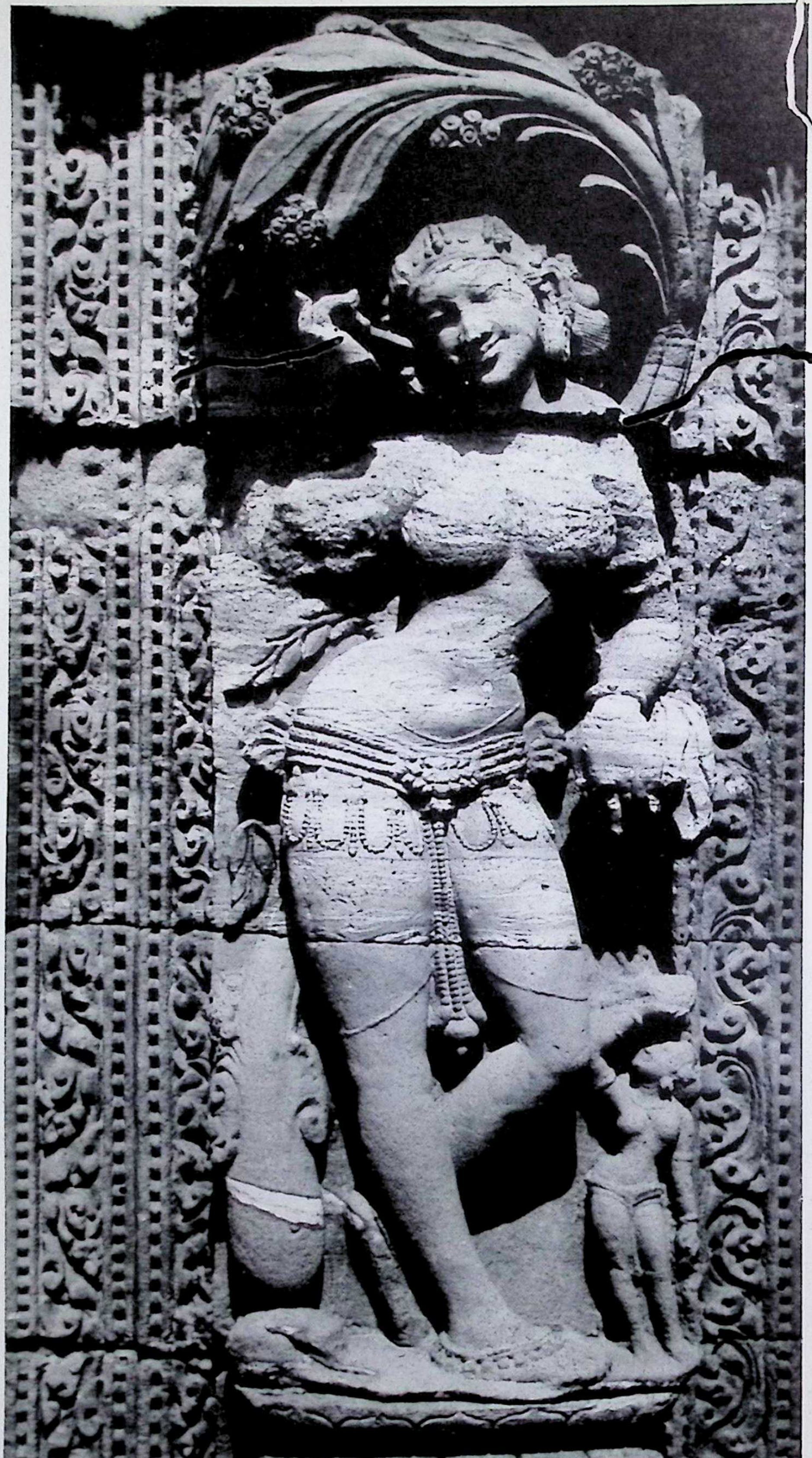

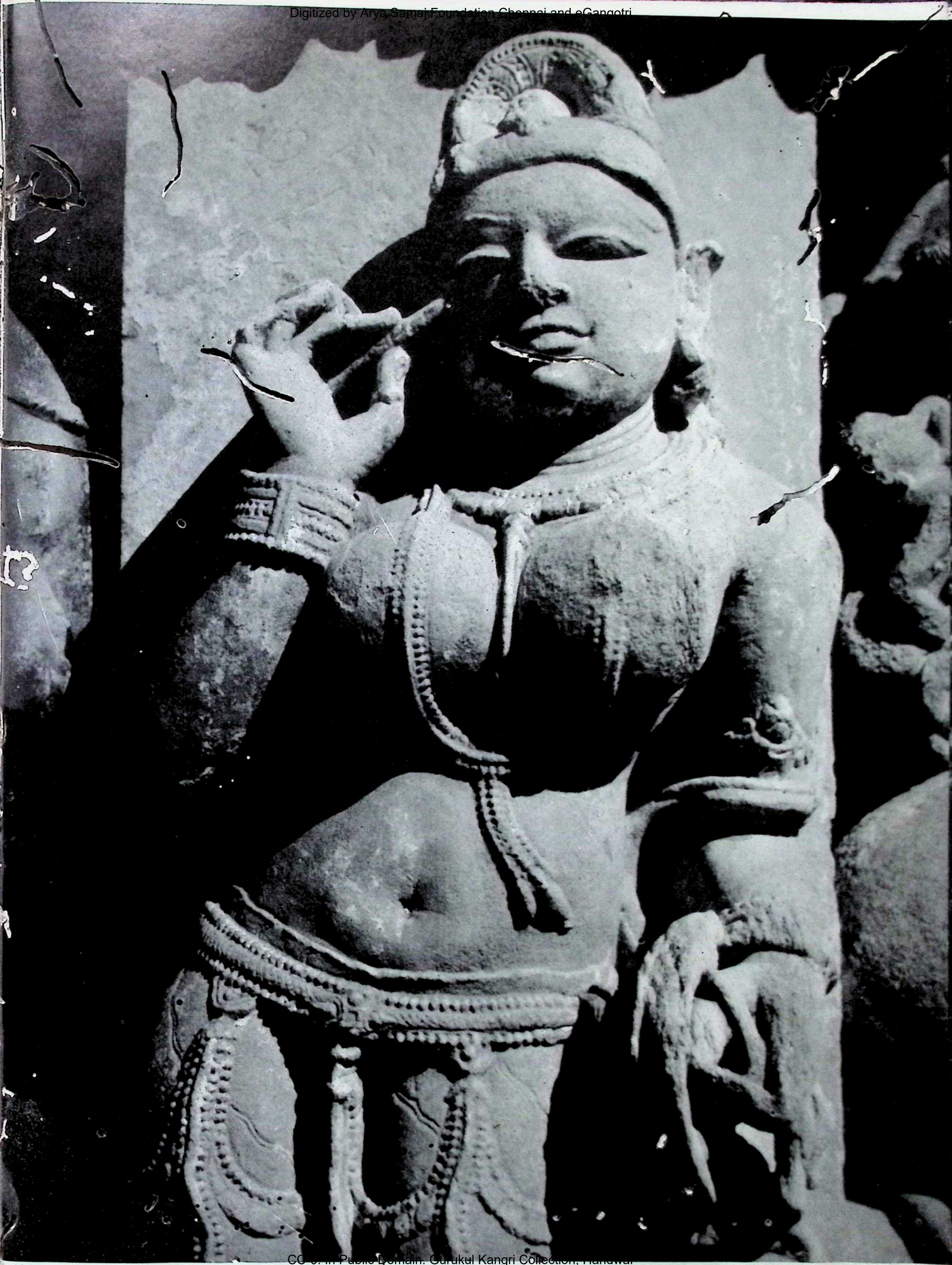

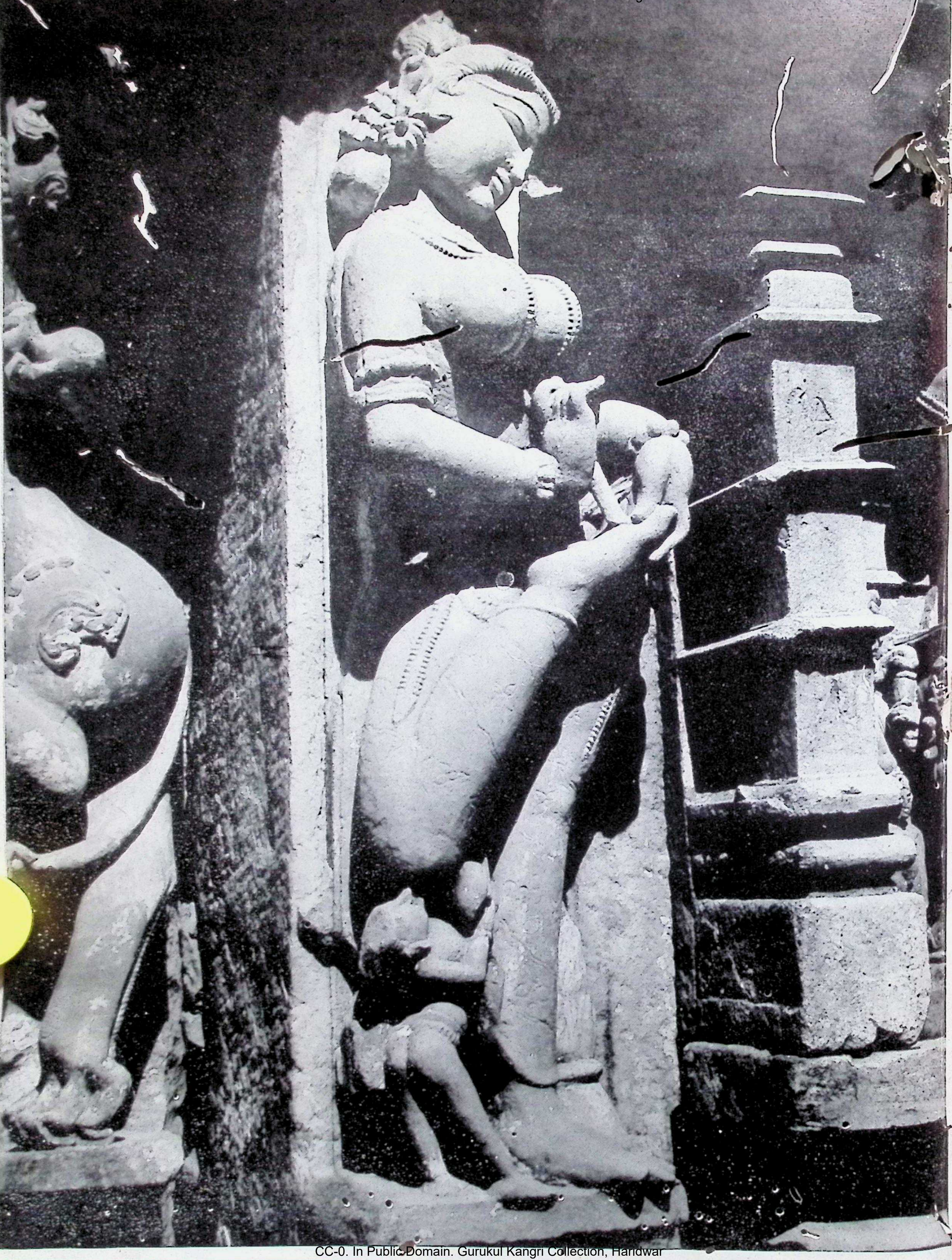

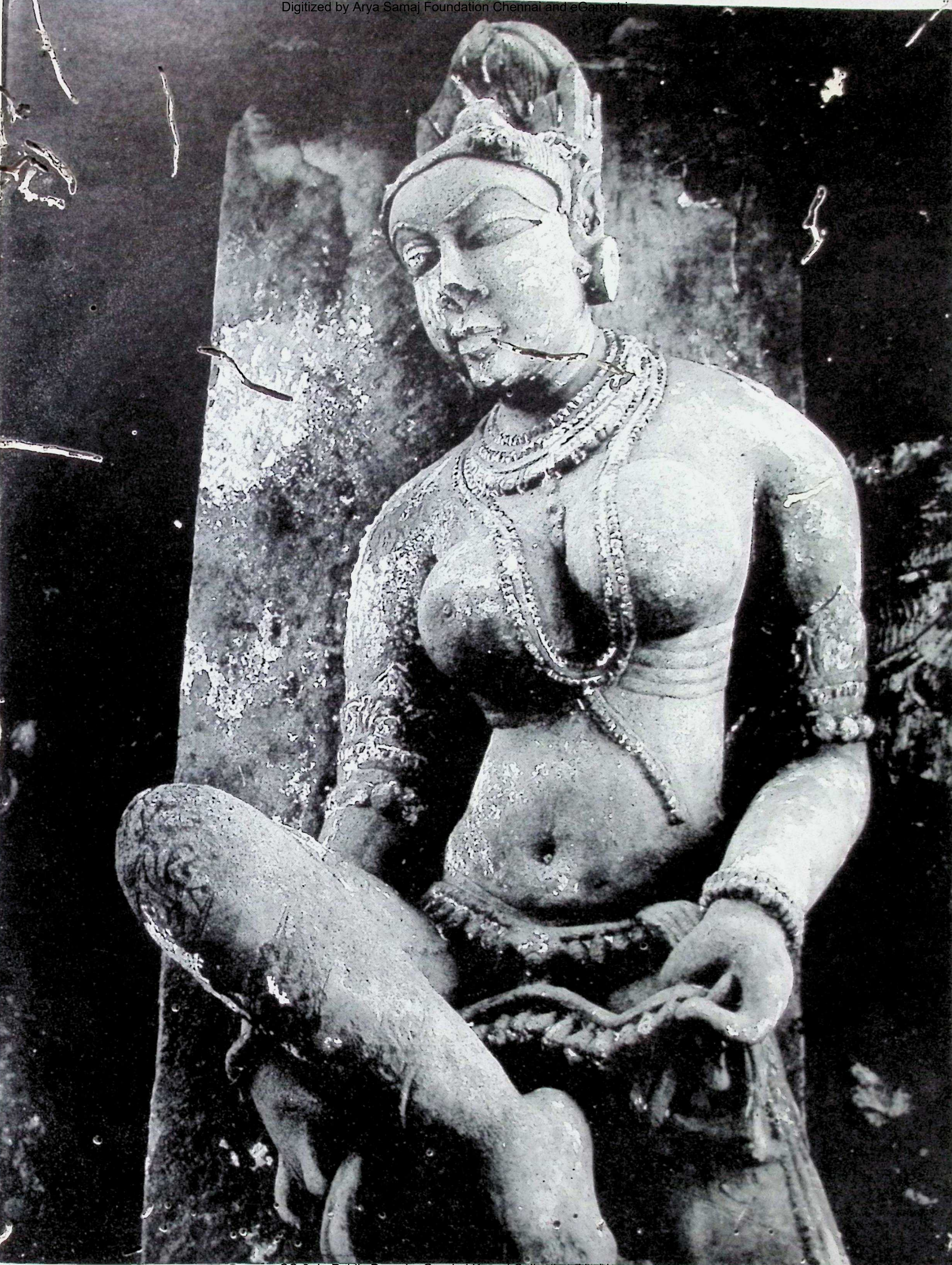

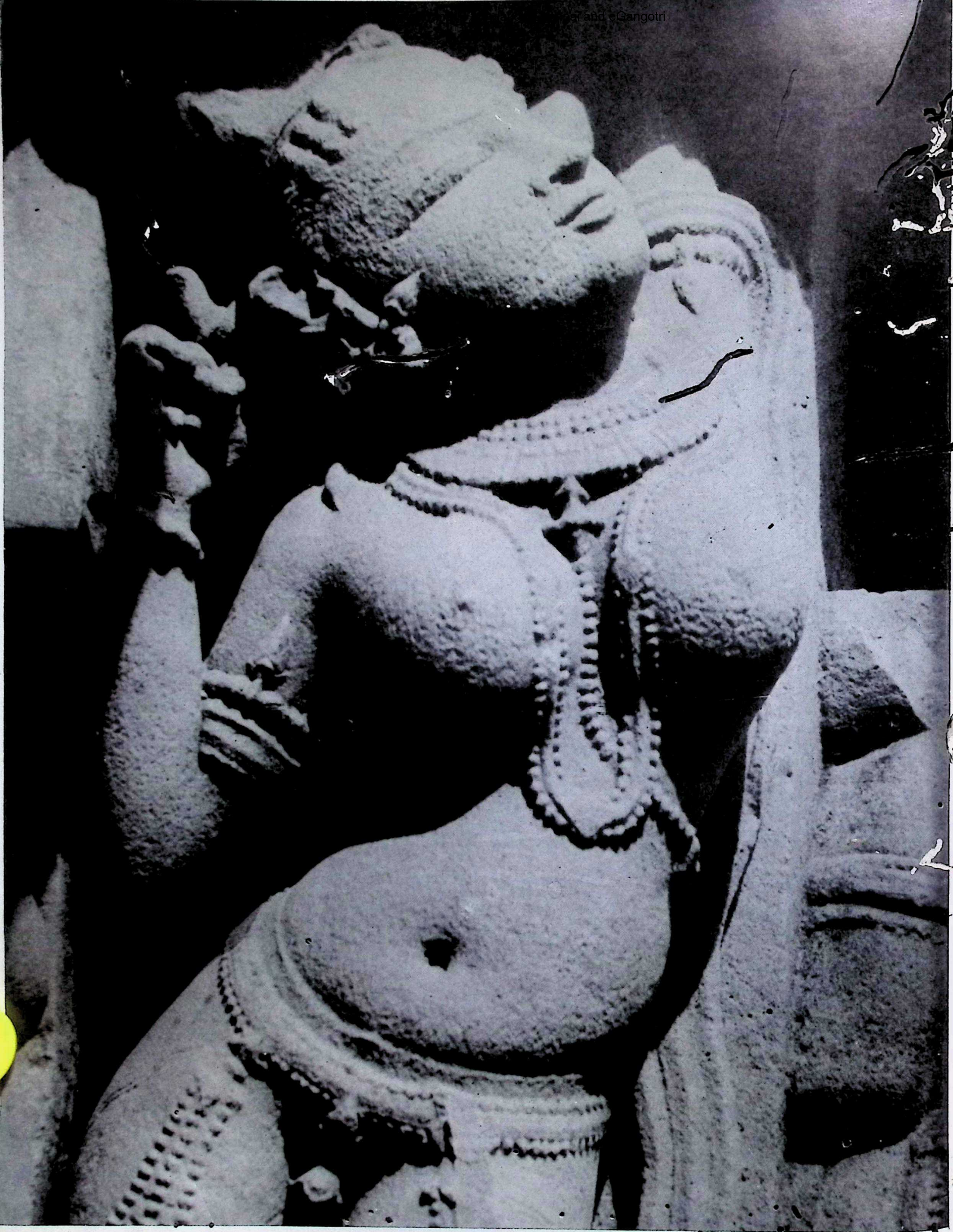

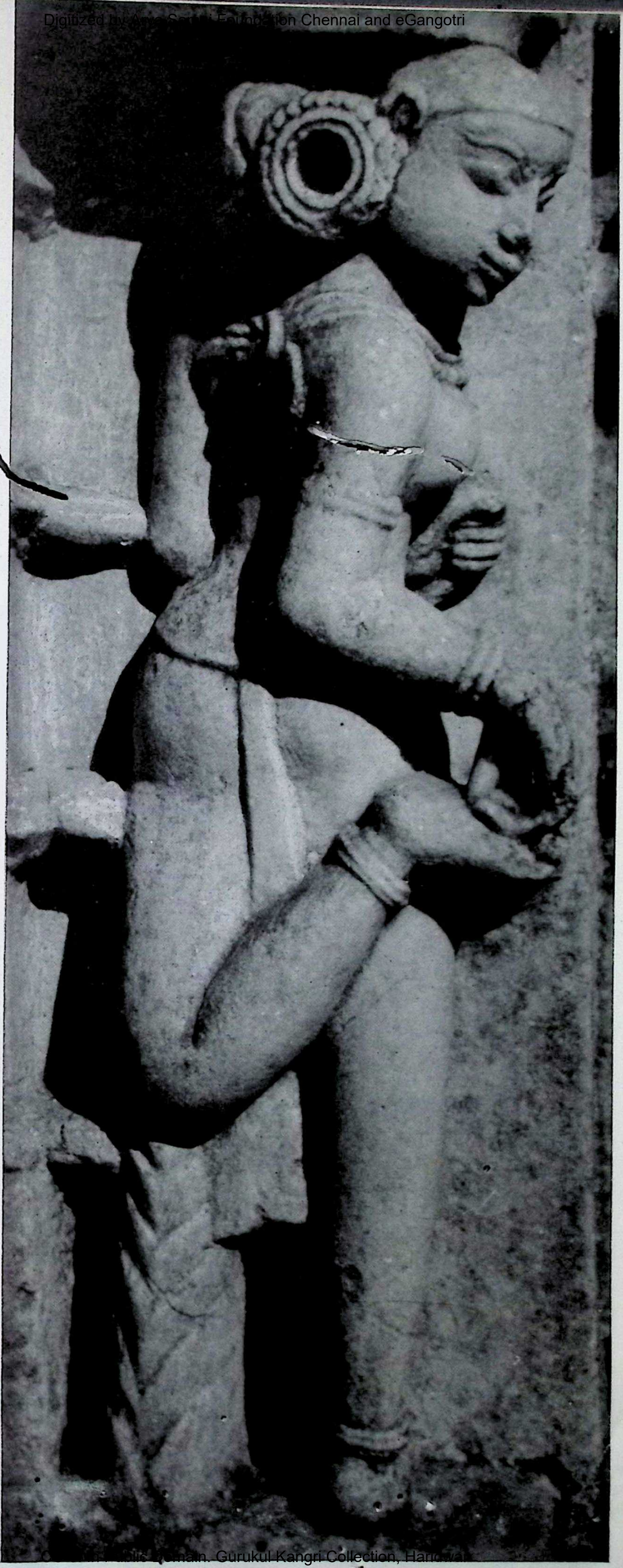

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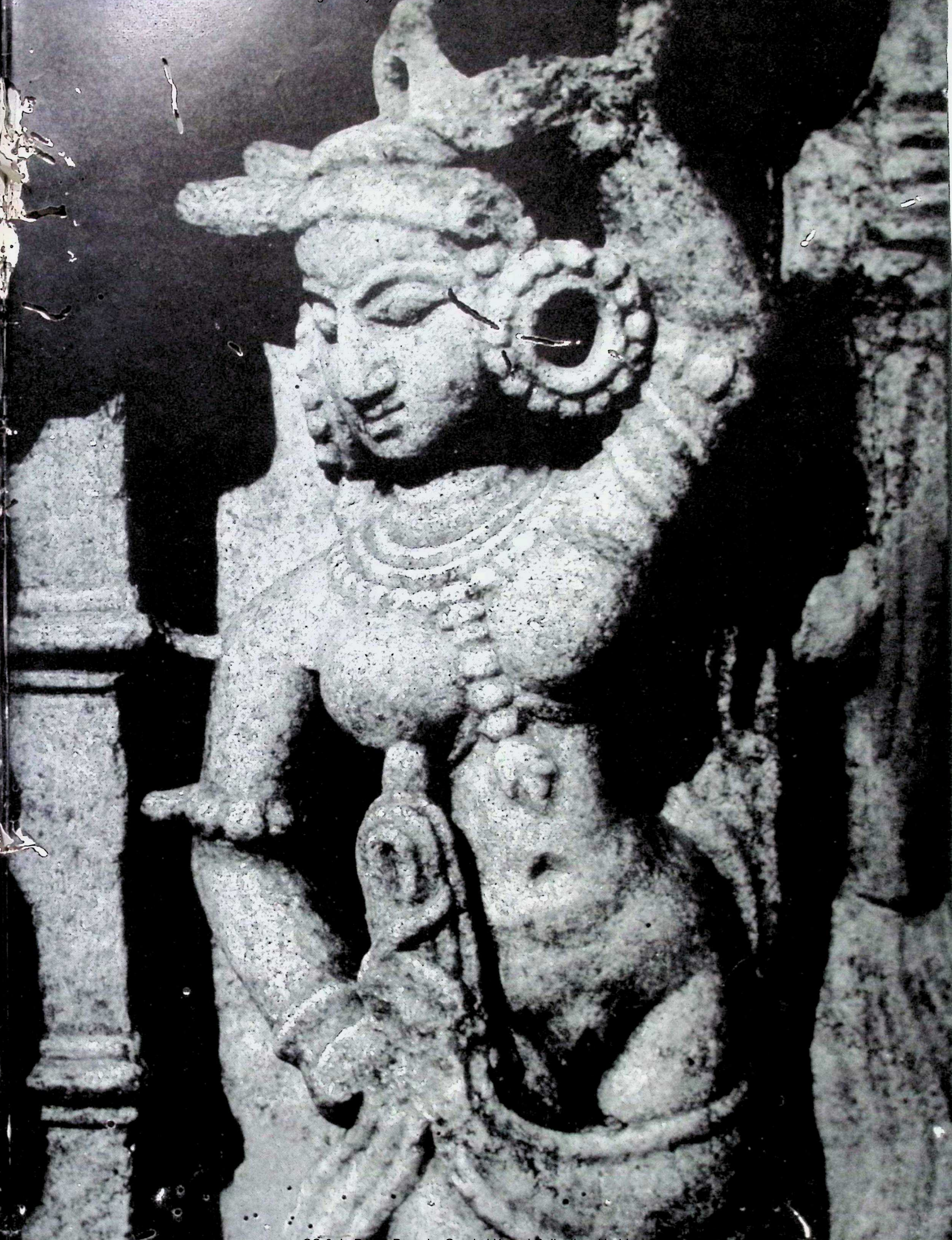

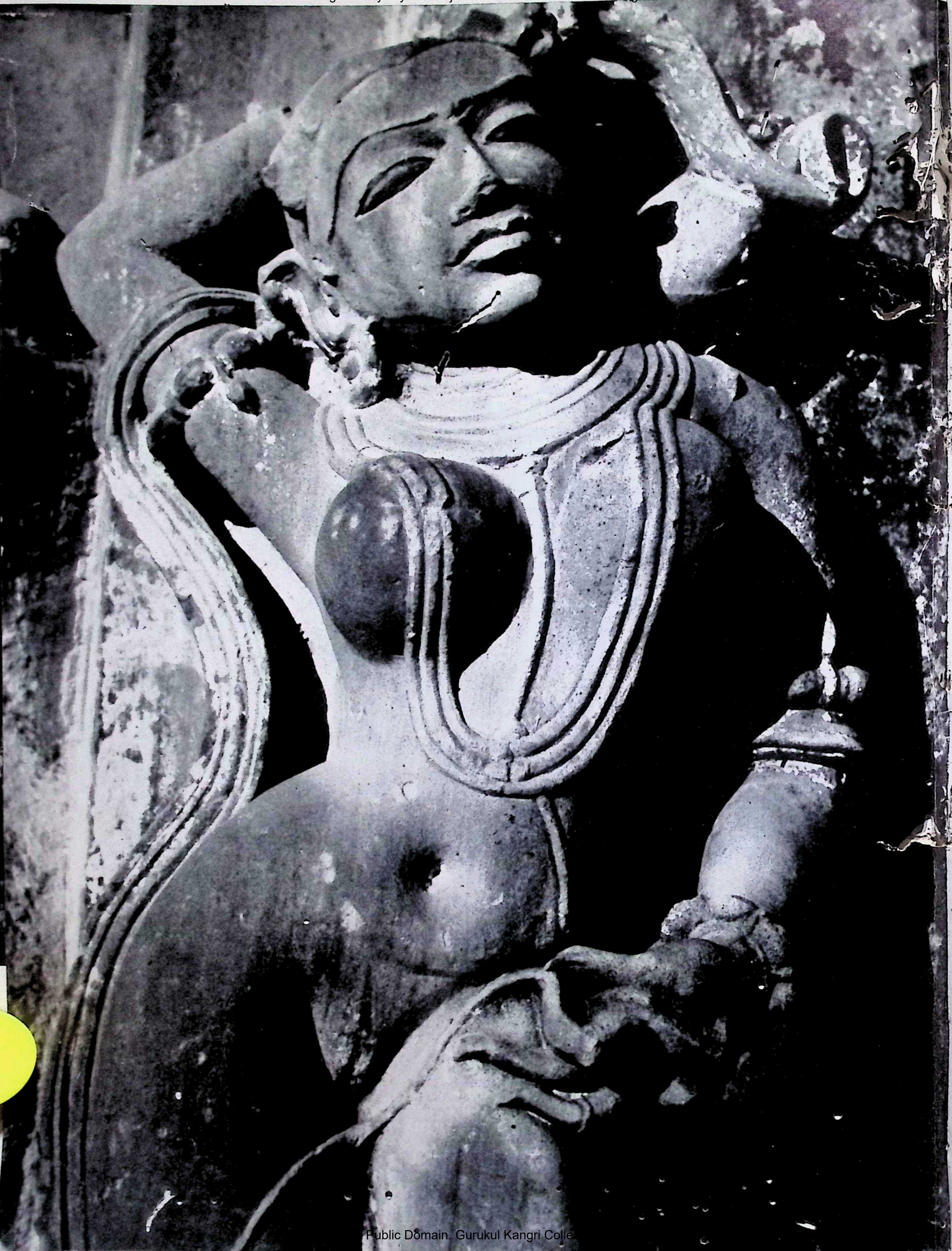

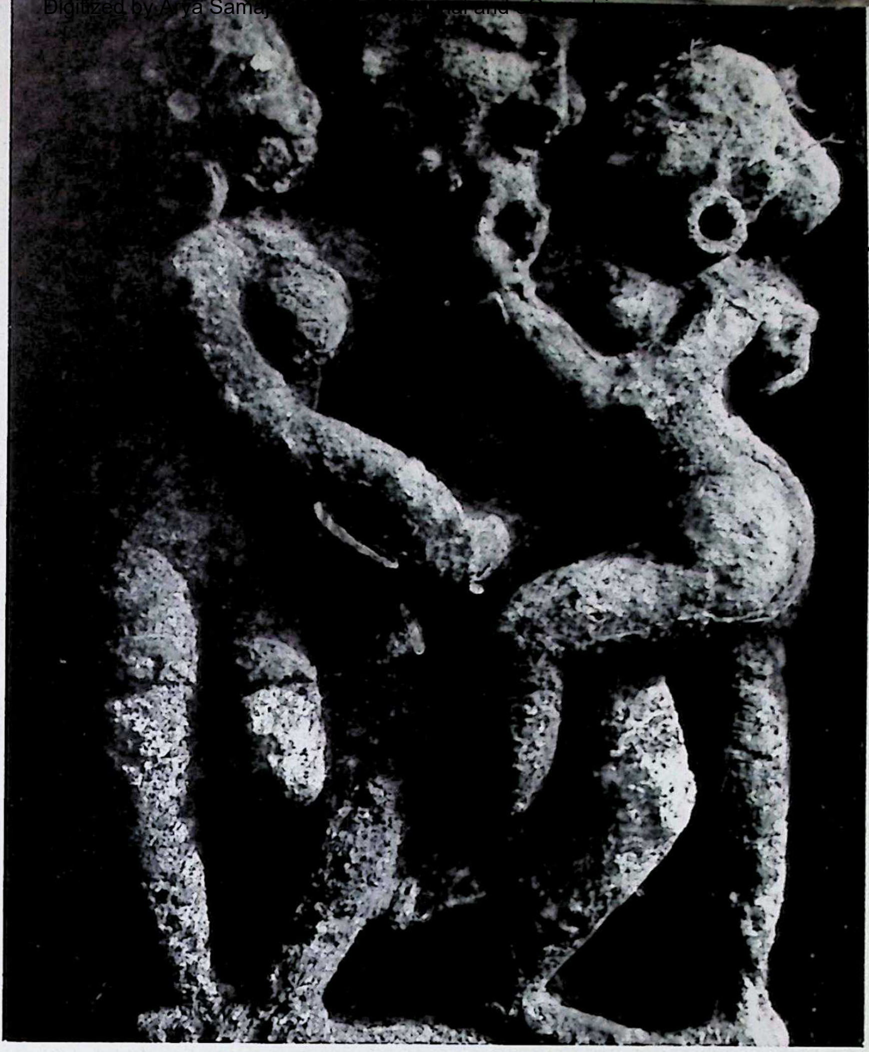

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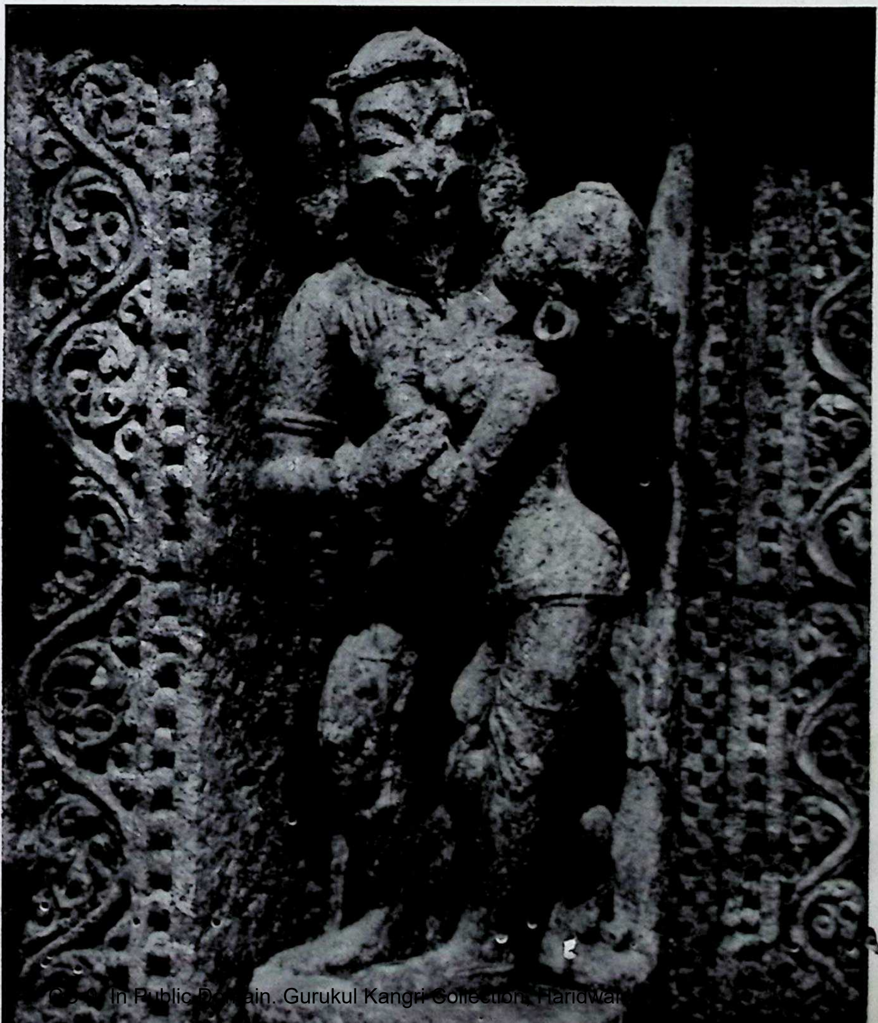

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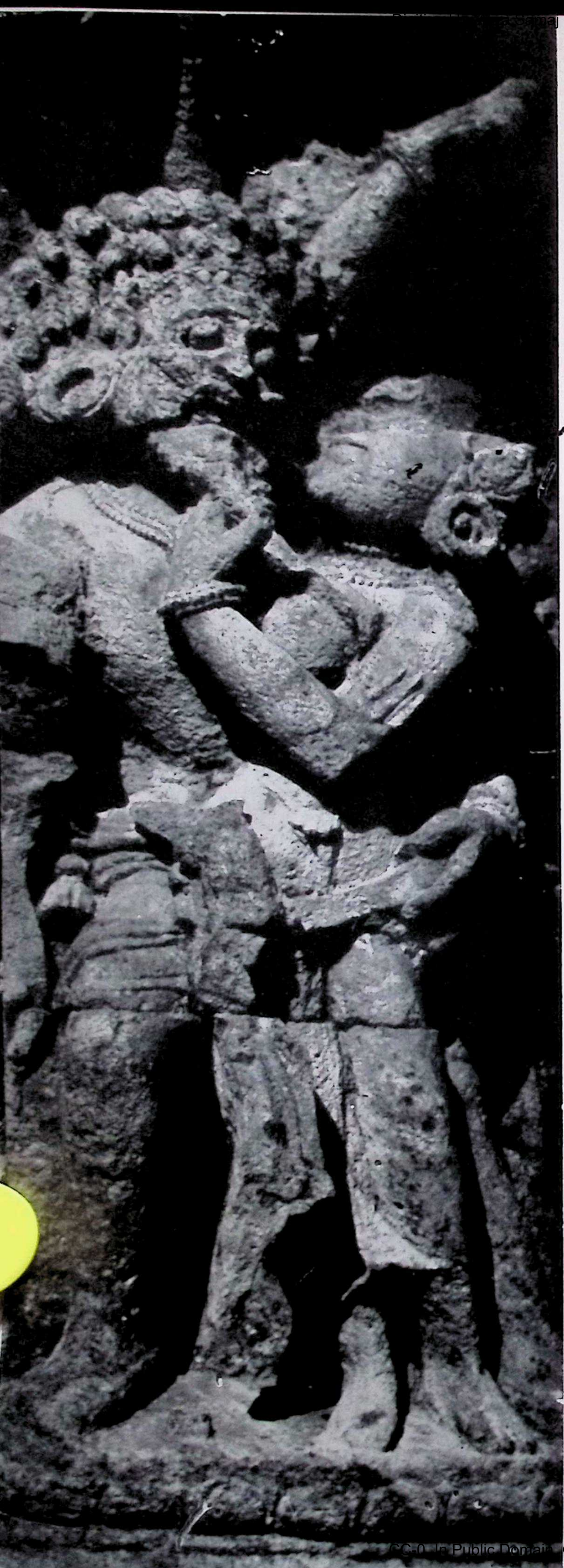

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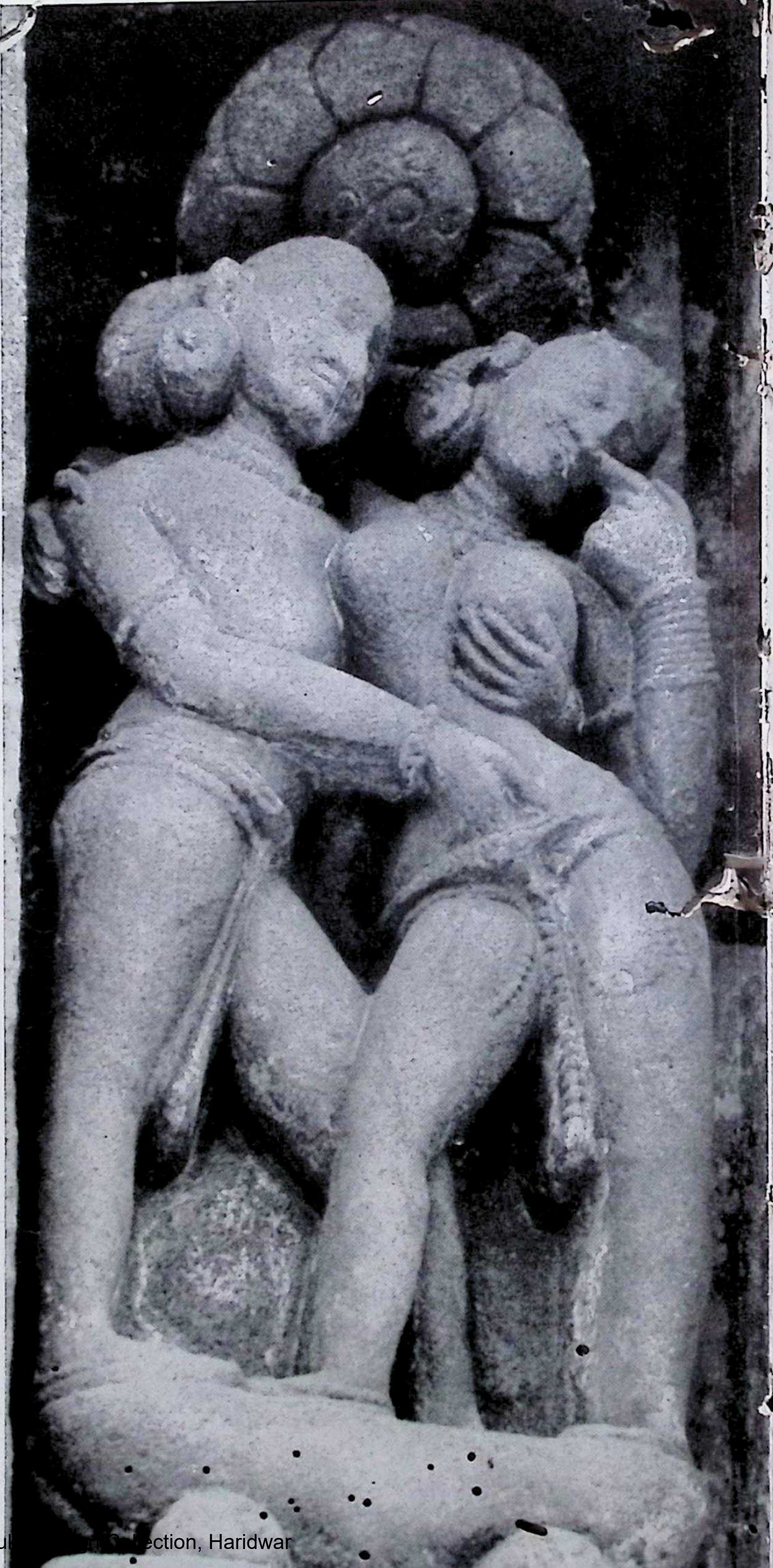

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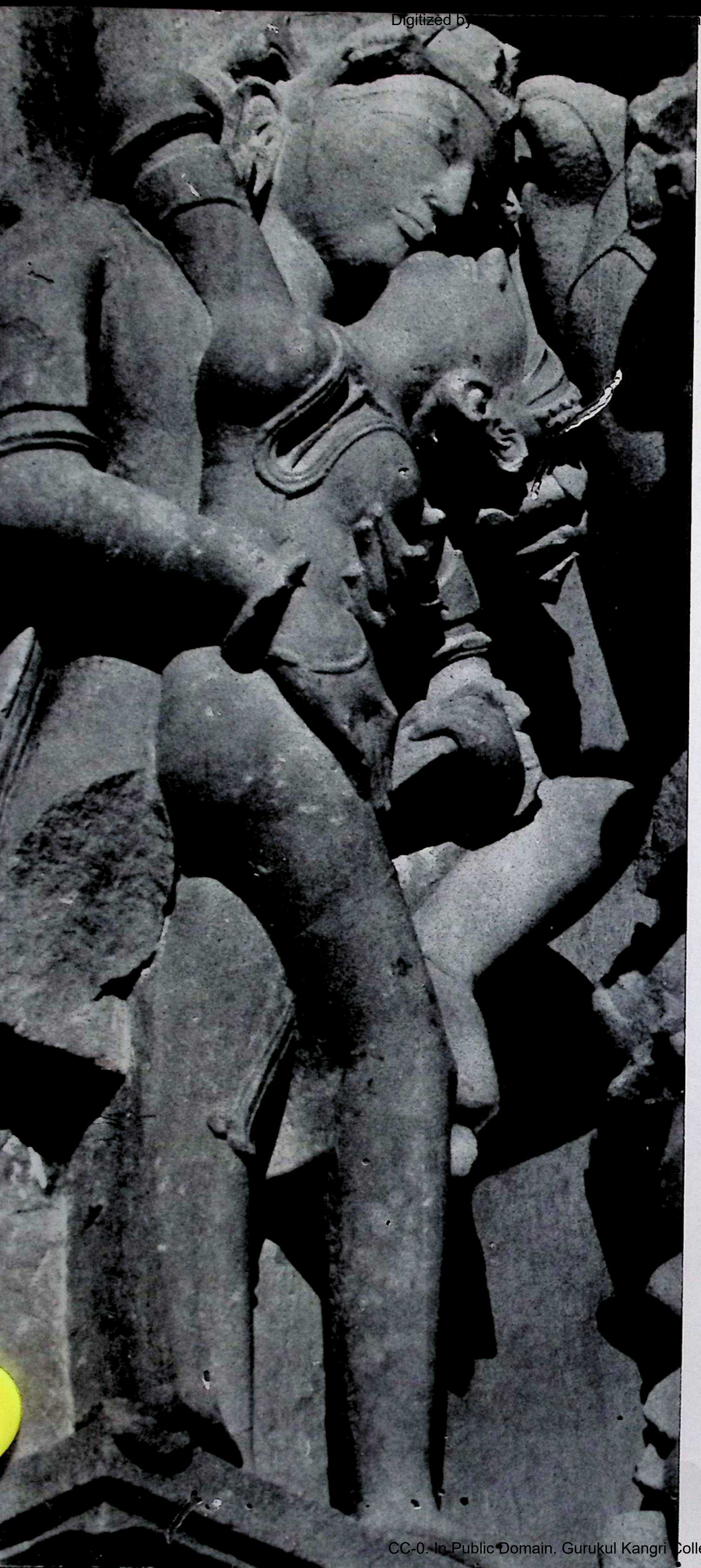

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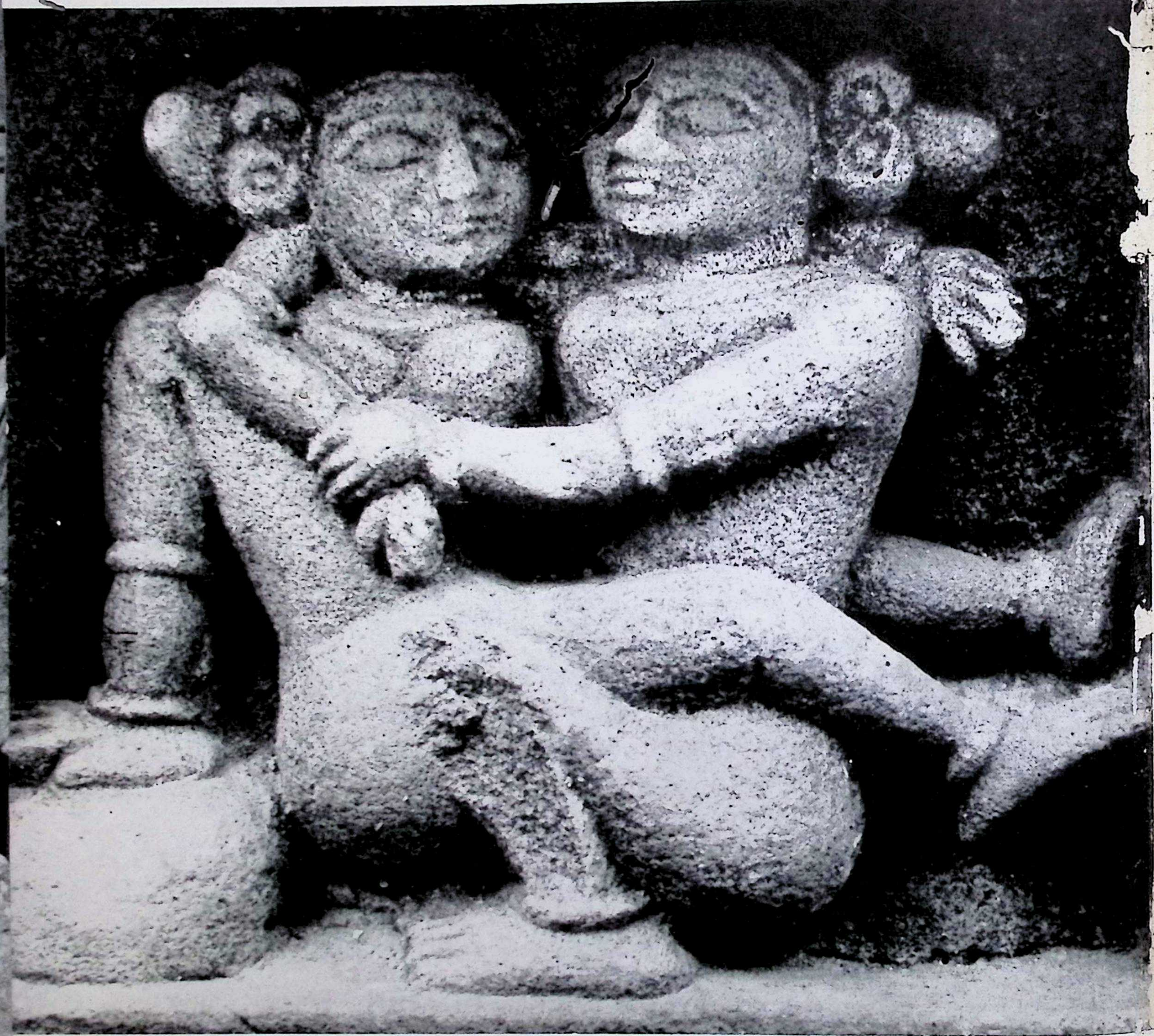

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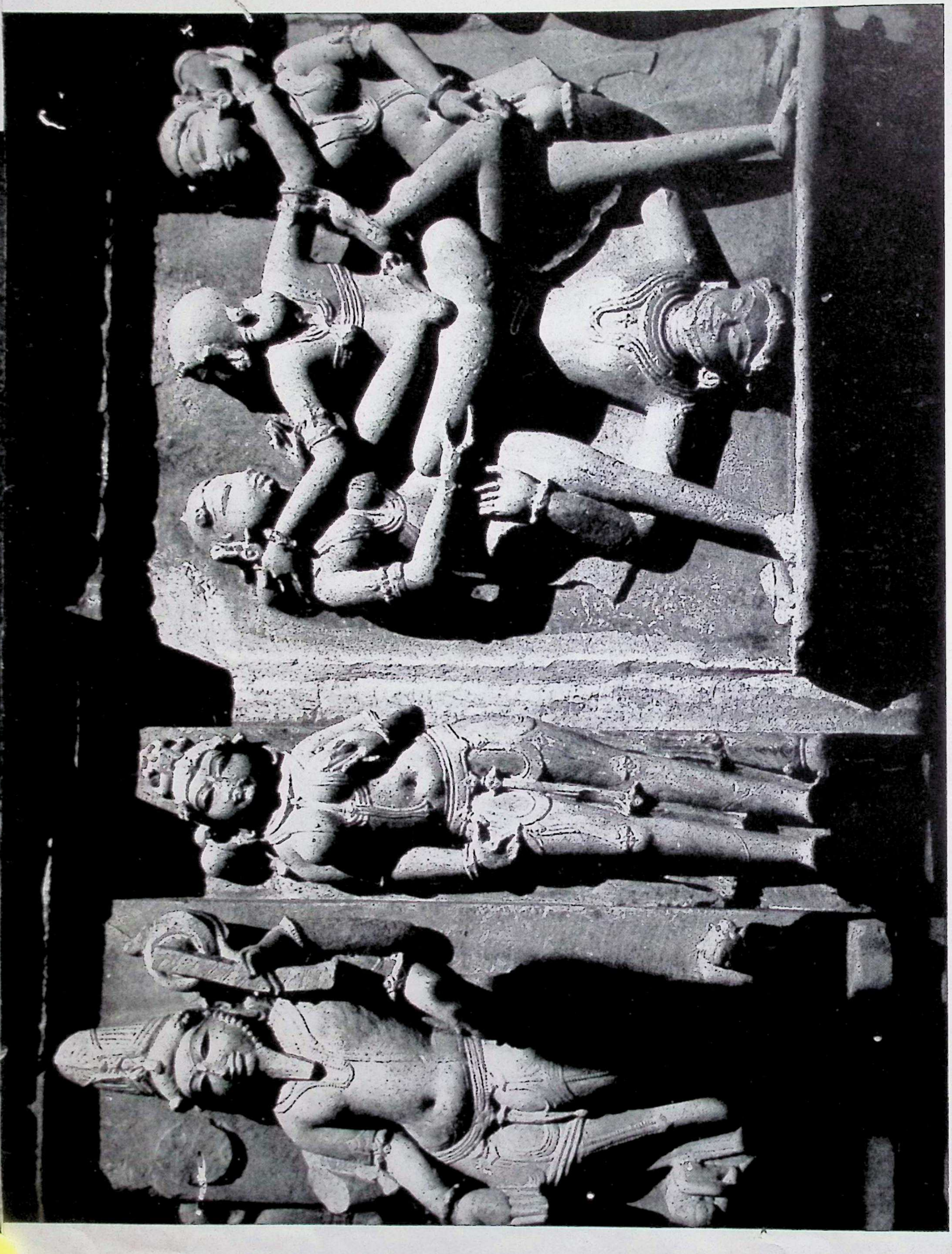

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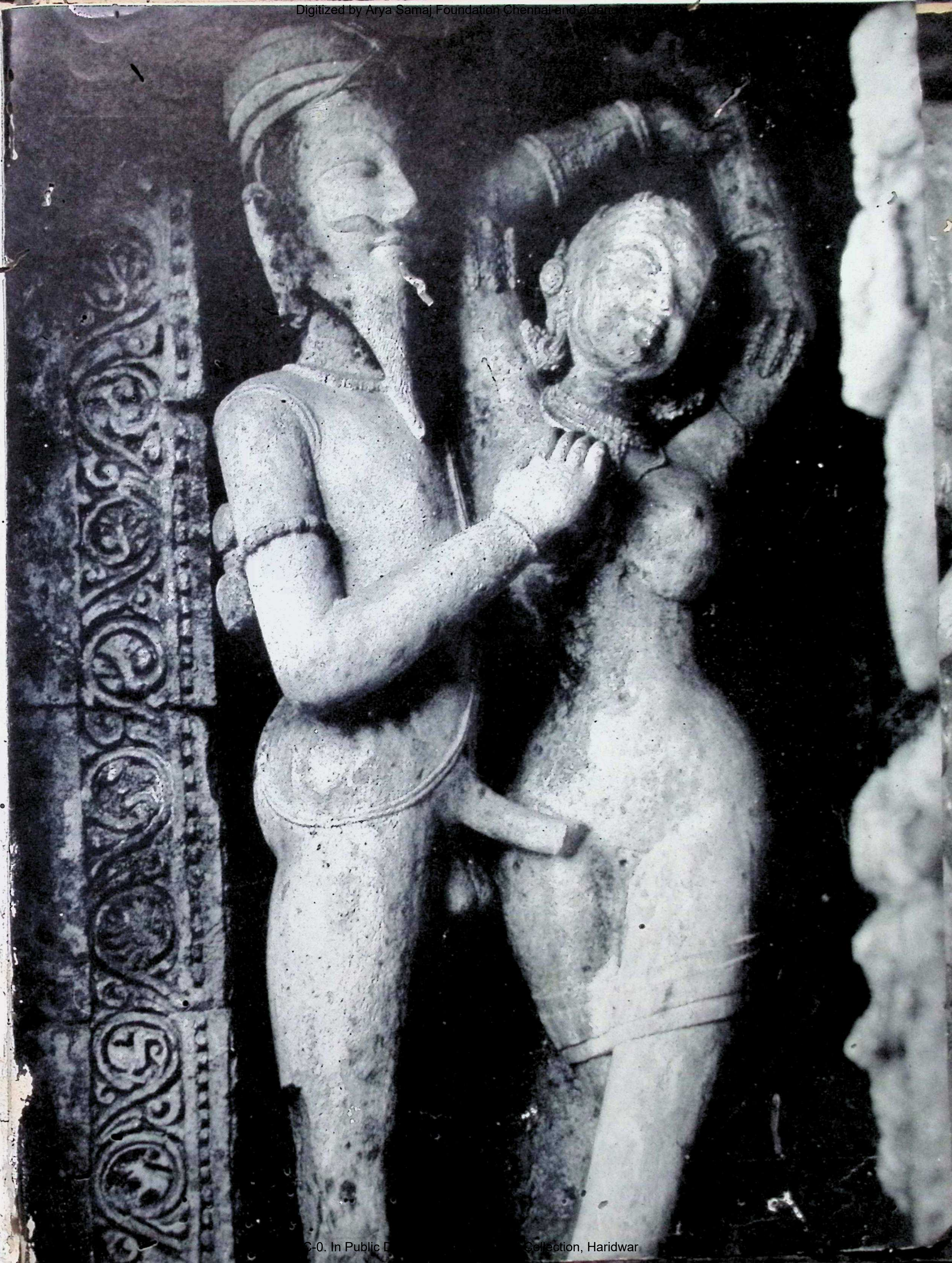

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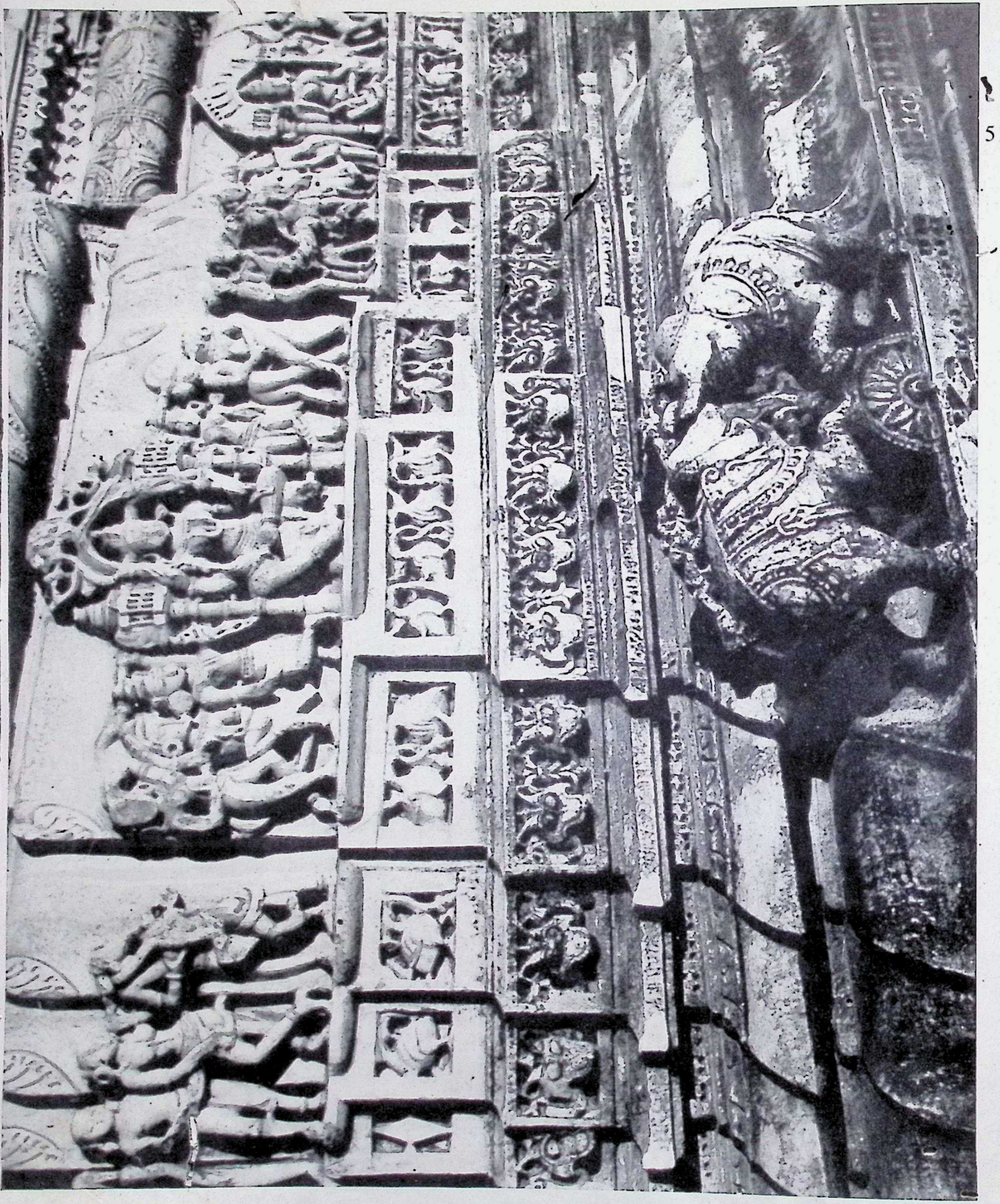

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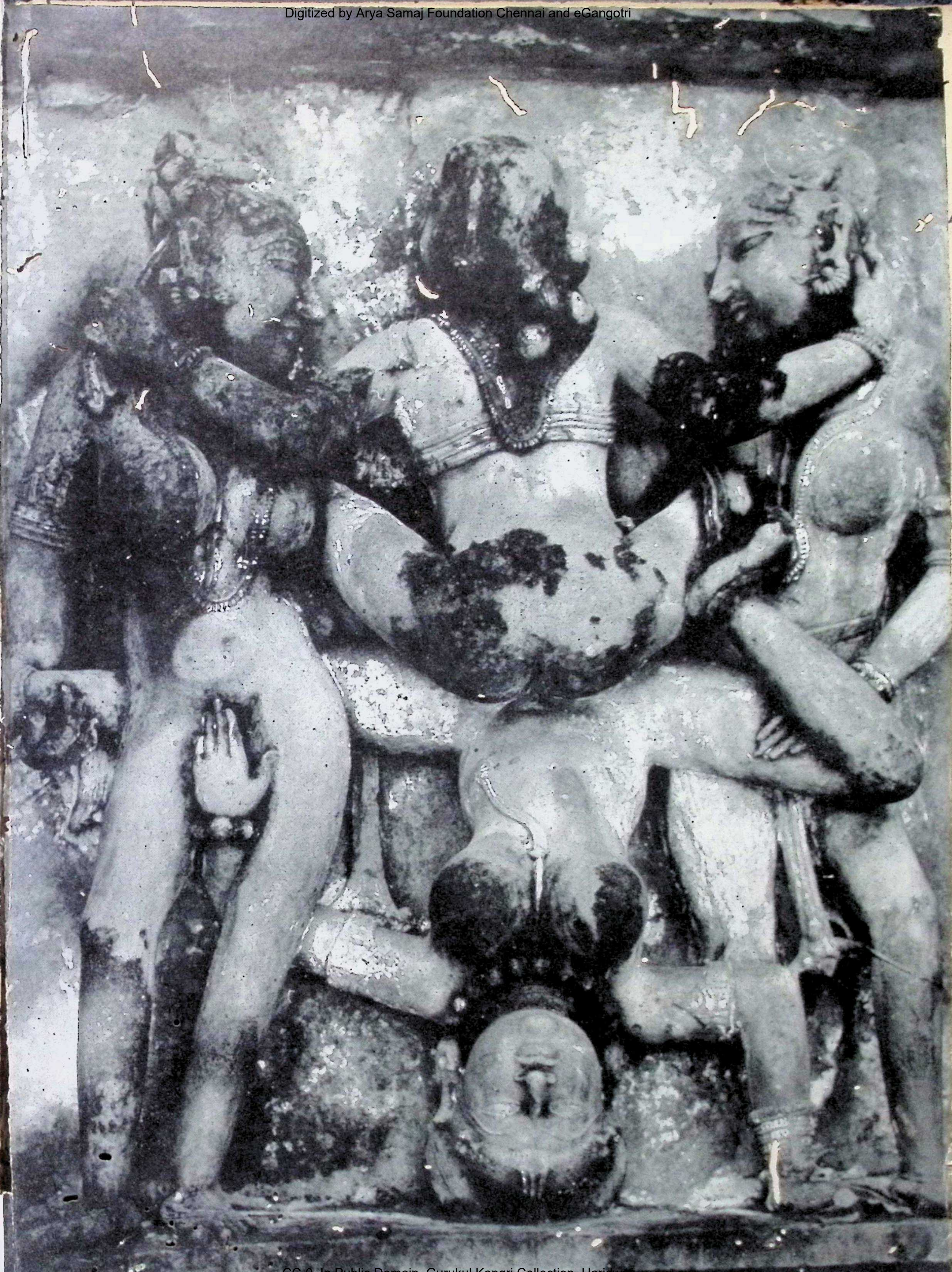

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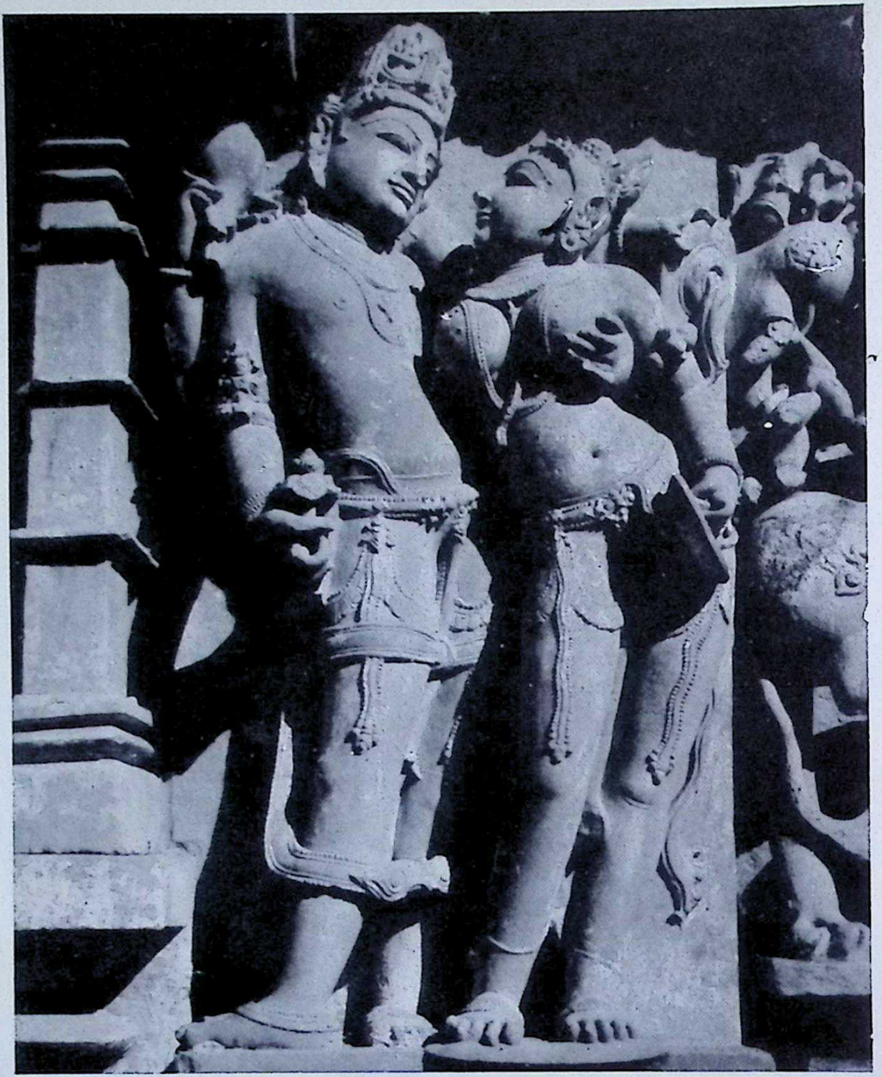

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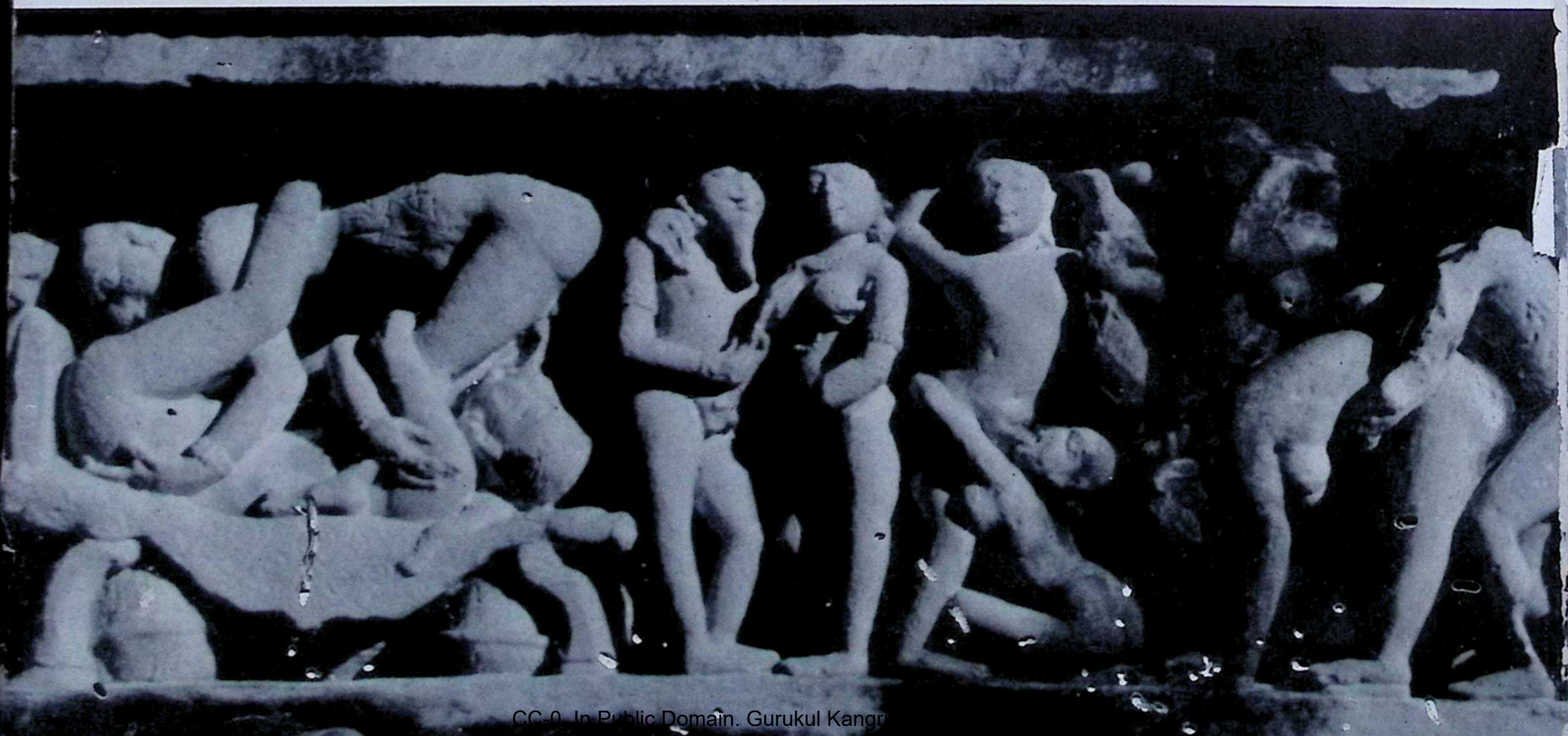

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